Faith and Criticism

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Faith and Criticism.

Faith

and

Criticism

Essays by Congregationalists—*W. H. BENNETT, W. F. ADENEY, P. T. FORSYTH, E. A. LAWRENCE, R. F. HORTON, H. ARNOLD THOMAS, F. H. STEAD, E. ARMITAGE, AND T. RALEIGH*

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Preface.

THE writers of these Essays have been drawn together and led to issue this volume by a strong desire to help those very numerous seekers after truth whose minds have been disturbed by the work of Criticism in Biblical and Theological questions. They are agreed in the persuasion that our Lord Jesus Christ—the personal Divine and human Christ —is the centre and source of all Christian life and thought. At the same time they exercise entire independence of judgment in the discussion of their distinctive subjects. Each author is solely responsible for his own essay. No attempt has been made to obtain unanimity of expression. It is hoped that the perfect freedom and frankness of the writers will secure the fuller confidence on the part of their readers.

The essayists have chosen their own themes; it is believed that between them they have selected most of the topics which urgently call for consideration; and yet it is evident that a single volume

such as this must omit many questions that some persons would desire to see discussed. Even the subjects handled can receive but a very inadequate treatment in a group of brief essays. For the most part only results can be given, while the methods by which the results have been reached are only suggested. Nevertheless the writers venture to hope that their efforts may encourage the younger generation of inquirers to face bravely the necessary changes of theological development in the certainty that the essential truths of Christ and of Christianity can never be shaken by criticism or discredited by growing knowledge.

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I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

WILLIAM HENRY BENNETT.

The Old Testament.

"Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ Θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις."—Hebr. i. 1.

"Ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ."—Eph. iii. 10.

"Until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remaineth unlifted; which veil is done away in Christ."—2 Cor. iii. 14.

THERE are two names that are above every name, Christ among men, and Israel among nations. It has been said that the result of modern Biblical study is the recovery of Christ and the recovery of the Scriptures. We might add the recovery of Israel, the actual living Israel of flesh and blood, the subject and channel of Divine revelation. Such recovery, however, raises an urgent and crucial question, and this question is already exciting hopes and fears in many minds. Fuller and clearer light upon the history and character of the Old Testament must mean greater force and fulness and clearness in the message, which the Old Testament has for our hearts and consciences. Given as this knowledge has been to our generation, its spiritual issues are an important part of God's message to His people to-day. How are we to understand and enter into this enlargement of our spiritual in-

heritance? What is its bearing upon the teaching of these ancient Scriptures? What is its practical application to the inner life of the Christian, to his service to Christ, and to the world for which Christ died? In our limited space we can only deal with some of the leading and more obviously fruitful aspects of this inquiry, and, subject to such limitations, the purpose of this essay is to state and interpret the question, and to make some attempt at indicating the probable character of the ultimate answer.

The conditions under which a complete answer would be possible do not yet exist. On some important points no certain decision has been reached. Very many points, indeed, are regarded by most scholars as finally settled; but though the issue of the controversy is clear, yet conservative criticism is English in this also—it does not know when it is beaten. We are thus limited in answering our question by the uncertainties that still remain in Old Testament criticism, and we are hampered in our statement of the answer by the relics of a controversy, by arguments and assertions, which have little intrinsic worth, but which have to be noticed on account of the scholarship as well as the Christian zeal and earnestness of those who constitute the forlorn hope of Traditional Criticism. There are, however, other serious difficulties; in many ways the meaning and value of the results of recent Bible study can only be fully and accurately understood and expressed by a generation of Christian scholars, who have grown up in rational and critical views of the Bible. The most

conscientious anxiety to be loyal to that truth with which Christ identified Himself when He said, "I am the truth," is often unconsciously controlled by preconceptions and habits of thought and feeling developed under erroneous theories long since given up. A later generation will have to re-state the positions of to-day; much that still seems impossible and unnecessary may eventually be recognized as the truth of God. The hesitation and regret with which modern views were first embraced may hereafter awaken compassionate wonder, and it may also be discovered that the reaction from the tyrannous and misleading authority of tradition carried criticism too far in the opposite direction. On the other hand, there are great compensations to those who live through an age of transition. They know by experience, and can affirm by their testimony, the unbroken continuity of Christian truth. In all that concerns the most fundamental facts, the deepest experiences, the most potent forces of the Gospel, the Old Testament, as it is now understood, is not only all that it was before modern criticism was heard of; it is much more. New wine has been given to this generation, but it comes from the ancient vineyard, and the grapes were ripened by the same sunshine of God. Even in an essay like this, dealing with more recent aspects of the subject, the reader will find much that is merely the re-statement of familiar truth; he will find, too, that much that seems new is already beyond the reach of controversy, and represents a solid gain, accepted and rejoiced over by almost all intelligent Christians.

Our generation like all others pays a heavy price for its fuller light and larger grace. The views which are being relinquished have been interwoven in constant and intricate association with many of the deepest and most cherished experiences of the spiritual life. Passages of Scripture which specially helped us embalmed the memories of Moses or David. If these personages must be disconnected from such texts, though the eternal truth remains, yet the pleasing associations disappear. It is as if we had worshipped in a sanctuary, where the word of God came home to us with the charm of dear and long-standing associations, and we were now called upon to enter some strange shrine, and hear the divine word from an unfamiliar voice. However profitable the discipline may eventually be, for the present it comes as grievous chastening. It is hard to believe that the pruning knife can cut so deeply and so freely, and yet leave the life not only untouched and unimpaired, but purified and strengthened.

Another part of the price of our privileges needs special emphasis, because it involves a necessary concession to those who see nothing but loss in the present readjustment of our understanding of the Old Testament. It is a truism that we cannot exhaust the whole truth concerning the nature and operations of God ; but even as regards the content of successive revelations, no age or school is able to hold with real and practical grasp all the great doctrines of Divine Truth. Each age receives its own message, and lives by its appropriation of that special aspect of truth which is its chief concern ;

and the truth which is the very bread of life to one generation may be a mere formula to the next. No subsequent age has ever entered into the doctrines of the Person of Christ as did the age of the Great Councils. The nineteenth century has not that practical appreciation of the Divine Sovereignty which was enjoyed by Calvin and Luther. An age which is led into new views of divine truth may find its spiritual receptivity exhausted, and fail to grasp some aspect of truth specially dear to its fathers. The life of the Church has its times and seasons, the morning star melts into the sunrise, the spring blossoms are merged in the autumn fruit. As we enter into the peculiar grace and blessing of each new season we necessarily lose that of the old. So with the development of criticism. Against our fuller knowledge of the Israel of the Exile and the Restoration, we set some loss of interest in the Israel of the Exodus; and while the Christian Church realizes as it never has done before the methods of God's revelation to His ancient people, Old Testament phrases and ritual will not so readily provide apt expression and suggestive imagery for the doctrines of Christianity. The compensation far outweighs the loss.

One last item of the price we pay is suggested by the familiar phrase that certain truths are "dangerous." The Gospel is the most dangerous; it is a savour of life unto life, and of death unto death. All truth involves serious dangers; it may be rejected, perverted, traded on for selfish ends, made the watchword of schismatic factions, the weapon of bitter and

mercenary partisans. It lays a heavy responsibility alike on those who accept and those who reject. The one thing more dangerous than truth is its denial and suppression.

Our newer information as to the Old Testament may be dealt with under Literary Criticism (questions of Date and Authorship), Criticism of Personal and Political History, and Criticism of Historical Theology. But these three subjects have many common principles and results; it will sometimes be convenient to deal with common matter in the section in which it first appears.

I. Date and Authorship.—Speaking broadly, the views as to the Old Testament, which were generally held up to the end of the last century, and which are still supposed by many to have a prescriptive right to unquestioning acceptance, are simply derived by a long process of uncritical repetition from Pharisaic Judaism. The early Fathers took over from the Rabbis a collection of baseless theories, which by mere lapse of time had proceeded to the higher but undeserved degree of Traditions. They are now doubtless sufficiently antique, but once they were as brand-new and as purely hypothetical as the latest theory to be found in the most recently published monograph of a German professor. A guess made centuries after the period it refers to does not become contemporary evidence by being repeated for two thousand years. Modern scholarship, with its wider knowledge and more rational methods, cannot be tied hand and foot by the casual and otiose conjectures of Jews living in the centuries

immediately before Christ. The traditions claim to be of immemorial antiquity, stretching back to the times of which they speak. Unfortunately the only evidence in support of their claims is found in the traditions themselves, and traditions have never been remarkable for modesty. These particular traditions are in themselves improbable; they do not hesitate in the case of the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Samuel, to ascribe books to authors whose deaths the books record. A slight examination shows that the traditions as to authorship are often obviously at variance with the characteristics of the books referred to, and are discredited by the first real critical investigation. These traditions owe their long tenure of authority and the remnant of consideration still accorded to them, to the dogmatism of an infallible Church, over which the spirit and principles of the Reformation have only gradually prevailed.

We may subdivide this section into questions of Authorship, Integrity, and Date.

(i.) *Authorship.* The older criticism was prepared to name the authors of most of the Old Testament books. With great positiveness it ascribed the Pentateuch to Moses; a large group of Psalms to David; Proverbs (in part), Canticles, and Ecclesiastes to Solomon; and all the prophets to the authors whose names they bear. It also suggested, with varying degrees of confidence, the Mosaic authorship of Job and Psalm xc., the authorship by Joshua of the book bearing his name. It gave the names of Samuel and his successors in the prophetical office as the probable

authors of other historical books. Investigation has shown that our information is much more limited than had been supposed by the above assumptions. We have no data to enable us to name with any degree of probability the authors of the Pentateuch or of any other historical book except the original Ezra and Nehemiah; or the authors of Job, Canticles, or Ecclesiastes. The Psalm titles have little weight as evidence of authorship, and it is doubtful whether any of our Psalms in their present form can be certainly identified as David's. Some at any rate of those with Davidic titles cannot be David's. Thus, as regards the names of the authors of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Job, Daniel, and many of the Psalms, our certain information is limited to the knowledge that the traditional statements and suggestions cannot be correct.

(ii.) *Integrity*. It is now pretty generally recognized that most of the books of the Old Testament have been subjected to more than one editing, that in most of them traces can be found of editorial additions and modifications, and that the text has suffered in its transmission by repeated copying. But the work of the editors of the Old Testament has been on a larger scale than this. The historical books are the result of the combination of independent documents, and some of them have passed through two or three editions. The process of combination has been like mosaic work, so that fragments of different sources lie embedded side by side in our present books. The authors have made scarcely any attempt to conceal their method of composition;

portions of the original sources are inserted with little or no modification, and the literary cement can be very clearly discerned. In the Hexateuch four main documents are thus pieced together. Instances of a different kind of editorial activity are found in Isaiah and Zechariah, which are not merely the collected works of these prophets. Editors or scribes by accident or by mistake, or on some unknown principle of arrangement, have included under these headings the utterances of a number of prophets, Isaiah and Zechariah being by far the largest contributors. As the authors of the added prophecies are unknown, Isaiah xl.—lxvi., etc., and Zechariah ix.—xiv. swell the list of writings which were supposed to be of known authorship, but are now recognized as anonymous.

(iii.) *Date.* The difference between the two schools as to date is equally wide and important, but of another character. The chronology of the new criticism is not less definite; but it assigns a later date to many of the books. The Hexateuch is no longer assigned to the time of the Exodus and the Conquest, but its leading documents belong to the Monarchy, the Exile, and the Restoration. Only a comparatively small portion can be ascribed to remote Hebrew antiquity. Job is transferred from the beginning of Hebrew literature to the end of the monarchy, or even to a later date. Canticles and Ecclesiastes are not Sŏlomonic but Post-exilic, unless Canticles belong to the Northern Kingdom. Many Psalms are taken from the period before the Exile, and assigned to a Post-exilic or even Maccabean date. The additions to Isaiah are Exilic and Post-exilic. Daniel belongs

to the Maccabean Period, and not to the beginning of the Persian Empire. In the case of Zechariah, however, the added portions are probably earlier than the original prophecy.

Let us consider briefly the significance of these changes. The recognition of the anonymous character of the Hexateuch and other books is at first sight distasteful, yet it emphasizes afresh their intrinsic value, and reminds us of the overwhelming testimony that is borne to their worth by the history of the Church. It has often been assumed that no book is inspired, unless it can be ascribed to some distinguished author. God apparently is a constitutional sovereign whose decrees have no force unless they are countersigned by a responsible minister. But the anonymity of so many books enables us to realize that the great words of Psalmist and Prophet and Sacred Philosopher do not need to be accredited by the spiritual authority of Moses or David or Isaiah, still less by that of Solomon. By their own intrinsic self-evident truth they compel our faith and obedience. Moreover, they are accepted to-day without hesitation or anxiety, because they are guaranteed by the experience of countless generations of believers. Again, the greatest revelations of the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Book of Job, II Isaiah, are anonymous. Their authors were too much possessed with their mission to think of labelling it permanently with their own names, their contemporaries and immediate successors were too much absorbed in the message to remember the messenger. God signified that His supreme approval was consistent with an entire failure to

obtain any niche in the Temple of Fame. And again criticism has taught us that inspiration has been more widely diffused and more continuously bestowed than had been supposed. The older criticism loved to ascribe as many books as possible to a few of the most distinguished political and military characters of the Bible—Moses, David, Solomon; or when such names were not available, to credit a great prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah with as many psalms, prophecies, and narratives as could with any show of reason be covered with the broad shield of his authority. Inspiration became a gift profusely bestowed upon a very few exceptional men, whose divine mission was apparently accredited by the splendour and dignity of their secular authority. The inspired books were concentrated in a few exceptional periods. Modern criticism has distributed the books ascribed to Moses, Isaiah, and other favoured names, among a number of inspired writers, and shows us the collection of Old Testament literature gradually forming itself, from the beginning of the Monarchy till the time of the Maccabees, under the continuous operation of the Divine Spirit. The natural man is impatient with a revelation which is given by obscure and unknown agents, and which grows gradually like the light of a northern sunrise. He is eager to associate the Divine message with secular prosperity, conspicuous success, and permanent fame. He loves to imagine that it broke upon the world with the sudden blaze of an Eastern morning. Criticism leaves enough in the Old Testament to satisfy this taste for the dramatic in revelation; but in the

nineteenth century men have to learn from obscure teachers and quickly forgotten prophets, and their understanding of the truth grows by slow and tedious processes. It is a comforting and inspiring lesson for every-day life to realize that partly through such agents and processes came the magnificent literature of the Old Testament; that scribes and editors and annotators contributed their share to the full expression of the truth. Men's knowledge of God grew in periods of obscure distress and uninteresting disappointment, and had flower and fruit in psalm and prophetic utterance. "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs."

In reality, however, the striking personalities and dramatic incidents of the Old Testament do not lose by the sacrifice apparently involved in the surrender of traditional views on authorship. One great gain is the rectifying and simplifying of our ideas of the teachers and leaders of Israel, whose characters and history have been blurred and distorted by the ascription to them of impossible combinations of heterogeneous writings and achievements. In composite photography grotesque results may be obtained by superposing a portrait of Mr. Gladstone, for instance, on one of Lord Salisbury. Equally grotesque and unnatural are any attempts to realize a Moses who could have written the four different documents of the Pentateuch, together with the

Book of Job and the 90th Psalm; or to combine in one picture the David of Samuel, the David of some of the Psalms with Davidic titles, and the David of Chronicles; or again to construct a single prophet who should possess all the characteristics of the authors of the different sections of the Book of Isaiah. These attempts would represent an individual as possessed of the experience, information and ideas of entirely different circumstances and widely separated periods. The historical instincts of many of our older commentators and expositors have saved them from being misled by the critical theories they ostensibly followed—they ignore or explain away the incoherencies of the narrative; but in spite of such unconscious corrections, false criticism has done much to give an air of unreality to Old Testament history, and to deprive its teaching of its full practical value. Our Moses, David, and Isaiah to-day are not such startling wonders as those of the older criticism, and the outlines of their character and history are not so sharply defined, but they are human, sympathetic, and intelligible. If Moses loses the special privilege of being directly informed by God of the exact dimensions and materials of the furniture of the tabernacle, he is now recognized as the great fountain-head of the religion of Israel, from whom priest and prophet and psalmist alike received the first impulse of their inspired enthusiasm. David remains one of the most picturesque and original characters of ancient Eastern history, and his work in securing the independence and unity of Israel is seen to have been

essential to the fulfilment of the religious destiny of the nation. Isaiah established the authority of the prophets, effected a practical alliance between religion and morality, and prepared the way for the religious unity of Israel.

The next point to be dealt with is the surrender of the *integrity* of many of the books. The older theories as to authorship, together with the view that the Hexateuch and other historical books were integral consecutive compositions, each by a single author, involved an infinite number of most serious difficulties. Commentators have lavished a misplaced and fallacious ingenuity; they have wasted the time and tried the patience both of themselves and of their readers in attempting to evade the plain meaning of words, and to explain, as consecutive and consistent narratives, combinations of two or more documents teeming with obvious contradictions and incoherencies. They have encumbered the sacred narrative with gratuitous additions in order to shore up their tottering theories, and yet it was only by persistently and conscientiously shutting one's eyes to obvious facts that it was possible to believe in the seriousness or sanity of the historians. But when once the composite authorship of the books is recognized all these difficulties vanish. We need no longer limit the use of our faculties in deference to the authority of Scripture. We understand that the historians and legislators had before them a variety of sources, all regarded by them and by the people with affectionate reverence. These sources often contradicted each other, but the compilers did not

attempt to reconcile inconsistent statements by any compromise of their own, nor did they always avoid contradiction by suppressing one of two varying narratives. They often laid the conflicting statements side by side, and left their readers to choose between them, or combine them, as they saw fit. Probably no theory of literary criticism has ever cut away so many difficulties at one blow, and offered a rational explanation of so many facts, as this method of composite authorship. There are still in two consecutive chapters of Genesis two accounts of the Creation, characterized by differences of style, vocabulary, Divine name, and theological standpoint, and giving quite irreconcilable accounts of the order and manner of creation. There are still two accounts of the introduction of David to Saul, contradicting one another as to time and circumstances. But we are no longer under any necessity to try and explain how an intelligent author could have written them *currente calamo* as consecutive narratives. Moreover, this method of composite authorship preserves to us historical sources centuries older than the time of the actual composition of the books. The analysis of Samuel and Kings into a variety of documents provides us with a larger number of early witnesses to the history. Indeed, these books are seen to have greater authority when their composite authorship and repeated editings are recognized. The teaching of each book is sanctioned by every writer who put his hand to it. The Pentateuch is rightly clothed with the authority of Moses, for it is a result of the impulse he gave to the national and religious life of Israel; but it has

also the authority of the group of prophets and priests who published Deuteronomy, of the writers who compiled the Priestly Code, and of the editor who combined the various documents into our present Pentateuch.

With regard to *Date*, the mere fact that many of the books are much later than had been supposed is unwelcome. Great age has its special charm in sacred literature as well as in architecture and geology. A mummy 5000 years old is more interesting than one only 4000 years, even if the spectator has no very vivid appreciation of the difference. Similarly, a Pentateuch dated B.C. 1450 is, on the mere ground of age, more interesting than one dated B.C. 450. The change is a real grievance, but it is not a spiritual loss. The appetite for early dates is not altogether archæological; it is partly excited by the idea that Divine revelation is to be separated as far as possible from present experience, to be set far away across wide spaces of the sea of time, and not recognized as "nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart." But there is a more serious difficulty; a Mosaic Pentateuch and Davidic Psalms would be data for the history of Moses and David: if we ascribe them to later unknown authors, are we not poorer in knowledge? The complete answer to this question must be reserved for the section on History; but it may be said here that as far as knowledge of a period is concerned, it is a question not of loss but of re-adjustment. Deuteronomy illustrates the time of Josiah instead of that of the Exodus, and a Psalm may express the religious experience of the Jews of

the Restoration, instead of unveiling the soul of David. But against a possible sacrifice of affectionate interest in these books we have to set the solid and permanent gain that results from placing them in their true environment. The teaching of a book is most thoroughly understood and successfully applied, when we have an adequate and correct knowledge of the period and circumstances of its composition. Many of the changes of date remove books from periods in which they were isolated phenomena, without any relation to the conditions of the time, to other periods where we can see a vital connection between the book and its surroundings. Job, as a work of the time of Abraham or Moses, is a mere *lusus naturæ*, a stumbling-block to the formation of any coherent ideas of those early ages; but Job as a work of the calamity and ruin of Israel at once illuminates its period, and is explained by its circumstances. II Isaiah, as the work of the friend of Hezekiah, is a mere portent, an unintelligible riddle; but it sheds a flood of light on the religious history of the Exile.

II. HISTORY.—In considering the history, we have not only to take into account these results of criticism, but also the present position as to the character and effect of inspiration. To those who held that inspiration carried with it historical accuracy critical results were of minor importance. An alteration of a thousand years in the date of an inspired book could not diminish the value of its testimony to the details of history, even at that distance. But it is now pretty generally accepted, even among critics of the older

evangelical school, that inspiration does not guarantee the accuracy of chronology, statistics, and other historical circumstances.

We are thus left to measure the evidence of Old Testament documents by the ordinary standards of historical criticism. Apart from any alteration of views on date and authorship, this attitude towards inspiration at once raised very serious questions. If the Pentateuch were Mosaic, it would still be separated by centuries from the Patriarchs, to say nothing of the Flood and Creation. Its authority as a witness to history would depend on its proved use of earlier documents, or on adequate external corroboration, which, with all deference to apologetic archæology, does not at present exist. But when we combine the much later dates of the books with the principle that their statements are to be appraised by the ordinary canons of evidence, there necessarily follows a large re-adjustment of our views of the history.

The Christian public has long been familiar with the allegorical interpretation of Jonah, the narratives of the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood. We are getting accustomed to hear without any special emotion, that in Ruth, Daniel, and Esther, a beautiful and instructive fabric has been reared upon a slender historical basis; but when Abraham and the patriarchs are called in question, judgment will not be allowed to go by default. It will, however, be desirable to attempt a statement of the general position before illustrating it by the discussion of any particular instances.

The analysis of Samuel and Kings into their original documents shows that they have preserved a variety of good authorities from the time of Saul and David. From the eighth century B.C. the historical narratives are illustrated, supplemented, and controlled by contemporary prophetic writings.

But even with this comparative wealth of historical material, it must be remembered that, with a far greater amount of material, difficulties are met with in determining the details of events even in the reign of Elizabeth. So that uncertainty as to details, and even as to the occurrence of alleged historical episodes, are to be looked for even in this period of Hebrew history; and the existence of a number of authorities naturally involves conflicting statements. The picture cannot be drawn with complete accuracy of outline and colouring, but, on the other hand, the general character, the leading events, the broad lines of development of political and ecclesiastical affairs can be ascertained by ordinary historical methods with as much clearness and certainty as those of most sections of ancient history. This is sufficient to enable us to profit by the revelation made to Israel during this period. We suffer no serious loss by uncertainty as to the years of the reigns of any given king, or as to whether Hezekiah stopped the water supply outside Jerusalem during the Assyrian war. But with regard to the period before the accession of Saul the situation is entirely different. No doubt our books include remains of documents and poems older than the reign of Saul. The Song of Deborah, for instance, can with confidence be assigned to a very

early date; the narratives of the Judges seem to work up very early material. But it is not possible to establish a pre-monarchic date for any of the more extensive documents which give the history of the Judges, the Conquest, the Exodus, and the Patriarchs; nor in the cases where very early fragments seem to be embedded in the narratives can accurate discrimination be made between the ancient record and the later addition. These more ancient documents exist, so to speak, only in solution, and we are not able to precipitate them so as to determine their character and authority. The two earliest extensive documents containing narratives of the Patriarchs and the Exodus, the pre-Deuteronomic prophetic narratives J and E are held to belong to the period of the monarchy. Hence, for everything before Saul our first-class authorities are meagre, fragmentary, and obscure. The earliest history of the patriarchs is separated by many centuries from the patriarchs themselves. It is necessary to recognize frankly the significance of these facts. The Christian student is naturally reluctant to assimilate the early history of Israel to that of Greece and Rome. But documents of the early monarchy can only shed a dim and uncertain light on the time of Abraham. It is not surprising that critics should attempt to supplement and interpret the scanty and doubtful information at our disposal by the application of theories obtained from the comparative study of the origins of history, and that they should find in the Book of Genesis allegories or parables, embodiments of national history or national ideals in

the form of personal narratives, wherein the patriarchs represent the character and fortunes or the duties and aspirations of Israel. By some, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Twelve Patriarchs are set forth not as historical persons, but as personifications and representatives of Israel in the various phases of its early history; eponymous heroes in whom the nation or tribe projects itself back into pre-historic times, making the collective tribal or national name the name of a hypothetical common ancestor. Such innovations are not attractive, and have not yet been shown to be necessary. These eponymous heroes are poor substitutes for the dear and intimate friends whose characters and adventures have so long been familiar to us. Nor can it be asserted that the reasoning on which such conclusions rest is as certain and final as that which determines the purely critical conclusions as to date and authorship. There are weighty arguments to be urged on the other side. A distinguished critic has said that when we come to Abraham a true historical instinct tells us that we are dealing with the authentic record of a real historical personage. Very many earnest students of the Bible will aver that their own experience endorses this statement. We are also encouraged to hope for very much from the inscriptions, though the specimens of apologetic evidence already offered from these sources are not encouraging. However, the student's sense of the vivid realism of the history of the patriarchs, and his hopes as to the possibilities of future excavations, must have legitimate weight. No one will maintain that the

existence of Abraham has been disproved, or that the narratives of the patriarchs have no foundations in real history. Individuals will continue to decide these questions according to their sense of the historical and religious necessities of the case. The limits of this essay do not admit of an attempt to construct an apologetic argument which might justify a belief in the historicity of the story of the patriarchs. The Church needs rather to be reminded that when the evidence only admits of a probable proof, no apologetic argument is likely to satisfy any one who is not already convinced. Critics can scarcely discount for ready money the possibilities of archæological investigation. The verdict of the historical instinct in favour of Abraham is only conclusive to those whose instincts give the decision. Such an argument is too dependent upon individual feelings and preconceptions to be an effective polemical weapon. A general consensus of opinion on the subject, or the agreement of a large majority of historical experts, might enable us to establish the historicity of the narratives on internal evidence alone. But no such consensus or agreement exists. The Church must be prepared to find that it cannot at present give an obviously conclusive answer to the polemical sceptic, and even that it cannot always on intellectual grounds remove the difficulties felt by devout and earnest inquirers.

But is there not an appeal to the Christian consciousness? We have not here, however, a question of the validity of a man's appeal to his own experience to satisfy his own doubts, but whether the experience and

spiritual insight of one section of Christians ought to be imposed on others, or can be accepted by them. There are, no doubt, matters in which popular religious feeling is worth more than the judgment of theological experts; but questions as to the facts of history three or four thousand years ago scarcely fall into this class. Faith is the evidence of things unseen, of the eternal realities of the fellowship of man with God; but the Bible does not teach us that faith gives us information about past events in the absence of contemporaneous evidence. Just as party discipline is most strictly enforced, and a parliamentary majority most vigorously used to defend the questionable acts of a government; so the leaders of the Church are often tempted to use the prestige of orthodoxy, of devout character and earnest Christian service, to secure implicit acceptance of doubtful and debatable points. However useful this method may be in politics, it is as fatal in religion as the Israelites' importation of the ark into their quarrel with the Philistines. With Christ's words about stumbling-blocks in mind, the Church will not venture to interpose between the sinner and his Saviour the necessity of arriving at a correct conclusion on the existence of Abraham and the authorship of the Pentateuch; nor will it countenance the diversion into critical polemics of the sacred enthusiasm and spiritual zeal which were intended to grapple with the misery and sin of the world. In view, however, of these difficulties and uncertainties with regard to Hebrew history, it will be well to advance a few considerations as to their effect on the spiritual value of

the Old Testament, which may serve to justify an attitude of confidence and hope. What follows will apply not merely to the patriarchs, but also to the general uncertainty as to detail, and as to the historical character of some events and persons.

A corollary to the proposition that inspiration does not guarantee historical accuracy will meet many of these difficulties. The Divine purpose in giving us the Old Testament was not to supply us with historical information for the sake of its historical interest. The special object of revelation is no more to inform about history as such, than about geology, astronomy, or psychology. Its object is to make God known to man, and to enable men to live in fellowship with God. History, parable, allegory, lyric and didactic poetry, may all serve this end. Nor when history is used for the purposes of revelation is it necessary that it should be other than the kind of history natural to the men, the times, and the circumstances of its writing. Accordingly, the primary and all-absorbing interest of the Old Testament writers is religion ; only in a secondary and incidental way do they write history at all. The books from Genesis to Chronicles are not so much histories as homilies with a profusion of historical illustration. Their authors have taken over a good deal of first-class material from their older sources, but they in no way make themselves responsible for its accuracy. The inspiration of the authors and editors of these books has guided them in the selection and arrangement of significant incidents, and taught them to understand and set forth the spiritual meaning ; but it

was not necessary that they should always estimate aright the historical value of their sources, nor is there any scriptural ground for maintaining that they were inspired to do so. Similarly, inspired writers were led to see in such figures as Daniel and Jonah suitable vehicles for conveying Divine truth, but they were not led to append to their works any statement as to whether the books were intended for history or parable. It is curious how many difficulties have been created by a certain school of criticism, which might have been avoided by carefully following out lines of development suggested by earlier teachers. Dean Stanley speaks with some severity of the allegorizing tendencies of Philo, Origen, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. He says, "Even to speak of any portion of the Bible as 'a history' has been described, within the last few years in our own country, even by able and pious men, as an outrage upon religion." Without going so far as these "able and pious men," it is possible in some measure to vindicate their memory. The tendency and attitude which Dean Stanley denounces rest upon the true principle that the Old Testament is only interested in history so far as history illustrates religious truth: it is primarily a book of religious instruction. The habit of making allegorical use of the Bible has been persistent and widespread throughout the life of the Church. Some of our most conservative divines freely use the allegorical method in their treatment of Biblical subjects. This habit of the Church implicitly recognizes and justifies the contention that the Old Testament includes narratives which illustrate and expound

religious ideas, without keeping at all closely to the actual circumstances of historical persons and events. Why should not Hebrew writers enjoy the freedom in the use of this method, which Christian teachers have always claimed? On the other hand, it must be repeated and emphasized, that the Old Testament includes a large mass of data from which may be compiled a satisfactory history of great periods of the national and religious life of Israel. These data have been preserved by the writers in the natural course of their literary activity. In these recovered documents, and in the way in which they have been utilized, we have light on the habits of thought and feeling of the writers and their contemporaries which would have been altogether lost if these writers had been the mechanical scribes of a verbally dictated revelation. In this way Providence has given us a history based on certain data and rational deductions, and accredited to the world at large, in the same way as the histories of Greece and Rome. It is therefore a far surer foundation of faith than any history whose credentials are only recognizable by those who hold a special theory of inspiration.

But books like Daniel remain material for history even when they are seen to be allegorical. Grote does not regard either the events or persons of the Iliad as historical, but he uses it to discover the manners and customs and habits of thought and feeling of the Greeks in pre-historic times. So Daniel may illustrate the spirit and ideas of the Maccabean age, and whatever may be the authority of a book for the persons and events that figure in

it, it will always be a valuable authority for the period in which it was written. Nor is the instruction to be derived from persons destroyed by uncertainty as to their claims to a place in history. The importance of Abraham and Daniel does not lie in their being unique personages, but in their representing Hebrew ideals, the highest life of Israel. Of the reality in this sense of the patriarchal narratives there can be no doubt whatever. They embody profoundly real religious experiences; they were received into the traditions and literature of Israel, because they appealed to, influenced and inspired generation after generation of pious Israelites. They maintained their place through successive revisions of the Hebrew Bible; they have passed into the sacred literature of Christianity and Islam, because they have been recognized by men of many races and of many periods as representative of spiritual experience and fruitful in spiritual instruction. Whatever view may be held as to the origin of Genesis, its narratives are no longer mere histories of Bedouin sheikhs; they stand as symbols and embodiment of what is most permanent and universal in human nature. The very doubts about the narratives have their use, because, though they lessen the archæological interest, they remind us that the lessons taught by them may be illustrated from every period of history. There have been many Abrahams who have gone forth not knowing whither they were going, knowing perhaps their geographical destination, but having no guarantee for life and fortune other than their faith in the unseen God. If a haze of uncertainty dims the features of Abraham,

we see more clearly the simple faith, the patriotic enthusiasm, the devout zeal of his children, who returning from exile crossed the same desert that they like him, might serve Jehovah in the Land of Promise. If Abraham were forgotten, the lessons of his life might be deduced afresh from the story of Huguenots and Moravians, Puritans and Friends, who have left all to follow Christ. Nor has any age been without its Daniels, men, and women, and children who, assured that no miracle would protect them, not accepting deliverance, gave themselves up to tortures and death. Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek Scriptures afford the most sublime and pathetic aspects of this tragedy in human life; the long-suffering and passionate devotion of man to God, his loyalty to an unseen King, are written in those acts of the Martyrs which are cherished in the memory of the Christian Church, or linger in the neglected archives of obscure mediæval towns.

III. Historical Theology.—Perhaps the most important result of the re-adjustment of Old Testament history and literature is its bearing on Biblical theology. The principles and results already noticed have a special application to this subject. The order of books, the course of history, involve the order and method of revelation. The principle that inspiration does not guarantee accuracy in history has its theological parallel. The message of revelation as delivered to us by inspired teachers is divine and permanent in its substance, but its original form and accompaniments are human and often transient. In various ways and degrees this principle is re-

cognized by all Christian thinkers. It is necessary to understand the disposition and circumstances of the inspired writers, in order that we may translate their phrases and ideas into those of our own times. It is matter for special thankfulness that the recovery of the true order and date of so many Old Testament books synchronizes with a marked development of interest in the circumstances of their authors and composition. Another widely recognized consequence of the same principle is the progress of Divine revelation, along lines parallel to the work of God in nature and in the growth of man and society. There is little new in all this, but recent developments have given a clearer meaning and wider application to all these truths. Especially they serve to correct a fallacious habit of thought which vitiates many statements about the Old Testament. We are constantly inclined to suppose that others must possess ideas with which we are familiar; in the Old Testament words like *soul*, *righteouness*, *God*, are erroneously invested with the wealth of meaning and associations accumulated through centuries of thought and experience. The Pentateuch and I Isaiah have been credited with references to abstruse doctrines like the Trinity, which is a crowning gift of the Spirit to the Church through the resourcefulness of Greek intellect. No doubt much that is most characteristic and valuable in Christian thought is found in germ and suggestion in the Jewish Scriptures. But, through failing to exercise his imagination, the Christian reader often sees a dense forest where there were actually only a few scattered saplings. He

forgets, too, that the books are spread over a period of at least six centuries, and that the earliest and latest characters of the history are separated by a much longer interval; he imagines Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Paul as all very much on the same theological platform, and only differing in degree and dignity from a nineteenth century divine. Theological writers have, of course, always known better, but their knowledge has not always prevented them from thinking the ideas of later ages into the remote past, and they have seldom made any very strenuous effort to guard their disciples against the same mistake. Any undue stress laid by modern criticism upon the human agents of revelation is amply compensated by its protest against the wholesale confusion between men's misunderstandings and God's truth, between primitive conceptions and later developments.

From this brief reference to principles only in our time receiving adequate recognition, it is natural to turn to the more obvious changes necessitated by the results of literary and historical criticism. Public interest is chiefly directed to the relation of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. When the former was regarded as Mosaic, its ritual and external ordinances were regarded as the somewhat mechanical discipline by which a nation in its childhood was drilled in the elements of a religious life; the prophets came later to lead the people to higher truth by unfolding the spiritual significance and intention of these external ordinances. This order of development exemplified the law of progress from observance of the letter to the life of the spirit, from obedience to positive com-

mands to the conscious harmony of the will of man with the purpose of God. This principle was maintained by forcible *à priori* arguments, and profusely illustrated from history. But however valid the principle may be, nothing but a mistaken deference to the supposed authoritative evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch could have led to the application of it to the relation of the Law and the Prophets. For the latter are either ignorant of or indifferent to the code which they are supposed to interpret; and the laws which are spoken of as adapted to the infancy of the nations, were re-established by Ezra as equally necessary and appropriate, after the age of the Prophets. The old scheme of the order of revelation gives the complete law in force at the Exodus and at the Return, but a dead letter in between; it gives us exactly the same full and elaborate system for the nation in its infancy emerging from the bondage of Egypt, and for the elect remnant, educated by the teachings of the Prophets and the discipline of the Exile, returning from Babylon in the ardour of patriotic devotion to the God of Israel. Such a scheme defies all attempts at reconciliation with any known principles of Divine government or social progress. This strange garment of legalism, which fits the nation equally well in its infancy and in its manhood, is even more marvellous than the legend of the seamless robe of Christ, which was said to have been made for Him by the Virgin when He was an infant, and to have always fitted Him, because it grew with His growth. To get rid of such

a conception is an obvious service to Biblical theology. It will, however, be objected that the new scheme represents a system of external ordinances as the sequel to the lofty spiritual teaching of the Prophets, the spirit lapsing into the letter. Unhappily, this also is matter of common experience; the natural man always tends to rest in externals, and there are often periods of reaction, like the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century, when the natural man has his own way, and his spiritual guides are thankful if they can keep him even within the bounds of the letter. The order of Israel's development, according to recent views, is, however, no mere reversal of the old order. In the first place, when it is said that the legalism of Leviticus and Numbers is now made a sequel to the spiritual teaching of the Prophets, we are apt to include in the latter II Isaiah and many Psalms, which are either contemporaneous with or subsequent to the Priestly Code. The relation of the Law and the Prophets could only be adequately dealt with in connection with an examination of the whole of the Old Testament in the light of recent criticism. Here only one or two leading points can be touched upon. The Ritual Codes of the Pentateuch are neither antecedent nor sequel to the great movements of prophetic activity. They are parallel results of the same great waves of spiritual influence. Deuteronomy stands parallel to I Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Priestly Code to Ezekiel and II Isaiah. The object of the Legislators, as well as of the Prophets, was the limitation rather than the extension of ritual observance.

Before the eighth century Israel and Judah were studded with sanctuaries at Dan and Beersheba, Gilgal, Bethel and Nebo, and numberless unnamed high places. Each would have a ritual, numerous sacrifices, and a priesthood. The priests of the high places are called in II Kings xxiii. 10, the "brethren" of the priests of the Temple on Zion. When Deuteronomy insisted upon only one sanctuary, it virtually demanded the suppression of the great bulk of the sacrifices and ritual observances of Israel. The ritual of the Priestly Code is not a set of mechanical observances substituted for a free and spiritual worship, but a decent and rational, if somewhat elaborate, order of service superseding the extravagant, licentious, and probably equally elaborate rites, which had prevailed in the worship of Jehovah at the high places. If we were acquainted with the traditional ritual of the pre-exilic Temple we should probably find that it had much in common with the Priestly Code, but that the latter was more orderly and restrained, more solemn and significant. Before the Exile the ritual might vary with an elastic and fluctuating tradition; the Priestly Code gave it the comparative fixity of a written document. Some such conception of the relative growth of Law and Prophecy will surely not be unwelcome to the reverent faith of earnest Christians.

The Psalms stand in a different relation to the problems of Historical Theology. In the absence of external evidence and clear historical allusions, the date of a Psalm will be largely determined by the stage of religious development to which it seems to

belong. The Psalms do not so much furnish data for Historical Theology as depend upon the solution of its problems.

The contraction of the period during which we have authentic information as to the History of Israel seriously narrows the range of our knowledge of the history of its religion. When everything from the first verse of Genesis onwards was accepted as literal history, the Old Testament seemed to furnish a complete account of all the important stages of the religious growth of Israel. Now we can only say that at the time of Moses or David or Amos, as the case may be, we find Israel in possession of certain religious ideas, that from this initial position we can trace a fairly continuous and complete growth, but that for earlier times we know little beyond what can be deduced by *a priori* reasoning from the situation at the beginning of the historical period. As in the case of the early literature, so the earlier stages of the religious development of Israel are constructed by the methods obtained in the comparative study of religions; this study is beginning to take an important place in theological education, and engrosses much of the attention of some of our leading theological teachers. Little objection can be taken to this tendency, provided that in the process due attention is paid to the unique characteristics and conditions of the growth of Hebrew religion. If we are disappointed as we see the beginnings of man's spiritual life receding into the mists of a remote past, we must remember that the human intellect has never been able to grasp the beginning of any kind of life. It would be con-

trary to all analogy, a startling anomaly in the methods of Divine Providence, if the beginnings of the Highest Life stood out sharply defined in the clear daylight of an express and literal Revelation. On the other hand, much is established concerning the order and relation of the great series of Revelations which moulded the thought of Israel from Isaiah to Daniel. The Divine Spirit will assuredly preserve the Church to-day from losing the substance by grasping at the shadow.

It has been obviously impossible to do more than give a few fragmentary hints on the great subject of Historical Theology; but these hints will sufficiently indicate how many important principles have to be applied with the utmost care and discrimination; how much evidence of various kinds and embracing manifold detail has to be utilized before the reconstruction of Old Testament Historical Theology is accomplished. Time must elapse before mature and permanent results are obtained; the process is yet far from certain and definite conclusion; in England it has hardly begun. Nothing in the data of the problem or in the conditions of its solution need alarm or disturb Christian Faith. Theology reaches forward under the New Criticism as under the Old, and the Historical Preparation for Christ, according to this newer criticism, is already a branch of Apologetics.

This attempt to indicate and illustrate under three main headings the value and significance of recent Biblical research needs to be supplemented by a few general considerations. The question of *Miracles*

does not belong specially to the Old Testament. It cannot be claimed that literary and historical criticism eliminates from authentic history all narratives of miracles. *Prophecy*, on the other hand, is a characteristic feature of the Old Testament. It is not now held that the prophetic writings were a kind of "Annual Register" duly dated and full of accurate detail, but published a few centuries too soon. The idea is now emphasized that the prophet was mainly a preacher of righteousness, and perhaps the real element of prediction in prophecy is too much ignored. Righteousness always has a future before it, and sets its face towards that future, which it claims for its own. The prophet will be as well informed with regard to that future as the man of science with regard to the future working of physical forces. The Divine Revelation to the Prophets included the main lines and principles of the future history of their nation, of the advent and work of the Messiah and the character of His Kingdom; though they did not always see the full meaning of their own symbols, or the wide range of application of which their principles were capable.

Turning from these questions to the advantages which accrue to Christian teaching, one of the most important is our deliverance from what may be called the Rabbinic method of apologetics. This method consisted in an ingenious manipulation of inconvenient details, a subtle sophistry as to facts, a remarkable casuistry in regard to ethics. In the interpretation of the Old Testament, white might be understood to mean black, or, at any rate, white and black

were explained to be alternative terms for an intermediate shade of grey. The attempt to show that all prophecy had been or could be literally fulfilled was only possible by the use of similar methods. A few details, "a grave with the rich," &c., were picked out of a chapter, and their apparent literal fulfilment was claimed as a triumph of apologetics; other equally definite statements were ignored or allegorized. This unhappy line of defence can be abandoned now that most critics hold that inspiration does not guarantee accuracy of historical detail, and that the external forms of prophecy are the symbols of the triumphs and defeats of principles and their champions. Those who surrender the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and other untenable positions are relieved from the use of arguments as questionable as they are ingenious. It is impossible to over-estimate the relief thus given to the Christian intellect and conscience. Harmonizing apologetics of the Old Testament have constantly tended to destroy intellectual candour, and to deaden moral susceptibility. They have been a stumbling-block to inquirers, a fertile source of scepticism, and a continual occasion of triumphant blasphemy to unbelievers. Modern Criticism would have amply justified its existence if it had done nothing else but remove this enemy of the Gospel.

Another great gain is the increase of intelligent interest in the Old Testament, and the recognition of its value as the record of an independent and permanent Revelation. It not only prepares a way for the New, but also contains special and charac-

teristic truths stated once for all. The New Testament often tacitly endorses these truths without finding it necessary to repeat them, nor could it have found any appropriate place for them. In this category we have the prophetic doctrines of the State and of Social Righteousness. If the social development of England and of the world is to be successfully directed along the lines of the Kingdom of Christ, it will be by the application to the twentieth century of the principles and teaching of the prophets of Israel. The conscience of the social reformer will be quickened by their uncompromising insistence on national responsibility and retribution; his enthusiasm will be sustained by their unwavering confidence in the triumph of righteousness. Turning to individual books, Job remains as the great revealed expression of God's sympathy with the burden which the mystery of evil lays upon the reason and conscience. Ecclesiastes by itself may be one-sided and defective, yet without it there are moods of the human heart, phases of experience, characters not ignoble, that would fail to receive the assurance of divine recognition and understanding. No one has a right to be an optimist who does not perceive with Ecclesiastes the truth in pessimism. Ecclesiastes reminds us that the frank recognition and expression of disheartening and unattractive truths rank in the judgment of God with many more obvious virtues. Examples like these remind us that the Old Testament, even more than the New, bears witness to what may in all reverence be called the perfect Catholicity of the Divine Nature. The Hebrew

Scriptures include the writings of men who may have denounced each other as heretics and perverters of the truth, and certainly would have done so if they had been contemporaries and had had opportunity. Deuteronomy and Job, Ecclesiastes and Daniel, rest peacefully side by side. On the surface they contradict each other as to the invariable connection of sin and suffering, and as to the future life. But under the guidance of the Spirit, the silent judgment of the Church has accepted them all as parts of the Divine Message, and thus set its seal upon a principle of great practical value, namely, that in controversy even the most diametrically opposed utterances will both contain something necessary to the full setting forth of the truth.

It only remains to add a few remarks on the witness of the Old Testament to the Person and Authority of Christ. Sometimes, unhappily, the process is reversed, and an attempt is made to use the Authority of Christ as a dead weight to crush the very existence out of Biblical Criticism. New Testament quotations of books under the titles of Moses or Isaiah, especially if the quotations are ascribed to Christ, are held to be conclusive as to their authorship. But Christ neither discusses these questions nor makes express statements about them; He and His disciples merely refer passages to "Isaiah" or "Moses" as a modern writer quotes "Chaucer" or "Shakespere" on the authority of current editions, without intending to express an independent opinion as to the authenticity of their contents. The Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch and the Integrity of

Isaiah are no part of the Gospel of Christ. None of His spiritual teaching depends upon His views on criticism. With one exception, it would be easy to eliminate from the sayings of Christ all references to the authorship of Old Testament books, by substituting "the Law" for "Moses" and "the Prophets" for "Isaiah" or "Daniel" without affecting the meaning of His utterances. The dilemma submitted to the Pharisees, "David calleth him Lord .... whence is he then his Son," does not depend for its force upon the Davidic authorship of Ps. cx. but upon the fact that the Pharisees accepted the Davidic authorship and Messianic interpretation, and yet had no intelligent idea of what was involved in their own position. It was one among many proofs that they were "blind leaders of the blind." Scripture informs us that Christ in assuming Human Nature limited Himself in the exercise of His Divine Attributes, but does not define these limits. They certainly cannot be assumed on *a priori* principles, but must be deduced from the facts. Christ spoke of the sun rising and setting in an age when everyone used those phrases in their literal sense; we do not forswear Copernican astronomy, but observe that in science Christ only exercised the ordinary knowledge of His times. If we find Him quoting as "Moses" or "Isaiah" books which are plainly not their composition, we do not forego the use of critical faculties and methods, but observe that here also Christ thought and spoke as other men. "The Son knoweth not the day and hour" of His own Second Coming. If Christ's knowledge was limited on a point so

immediately connected with His own work, we need not hesitate to include the Philosophy of History and the Principles of Literary Criticism with other sciences as matters in regard to which Christ "for our sakes became poor." They are covered by the ancient Catholic doctrine of the Kenosis. Modern Theology owes much to Old Testament Criticism for thus calling attention to the necessity of defending against the constant popular tendency to Docetism the reality of our Lord's Human Nature, the recognition of which is an essential condition of faith in His Deity. From another point of view, the achievements of criticism as a result of fearless loyalty to truth are a triumph of the Spirit of Christ; and other signs are fast multiplying that the Church will emerge from this period of transition and controversy with new energy and authority, derived from a fuller and truer knowledge of Christ Himself. This is specially exemplified when we see how new developments of Historical Theology show a growth of religious ideas and hopes all pointing forward to Christ, and preparing the way for Him. Older statements as to the Preparation for Christ tend sometimes to make it consist in a series of enigmas, to which He Himself supplied the key; it is now seen in the orderly movement of great spiritual forces, finding expression in a series of revelations, each doing its special work to bring in the Day of the Lord. The main religious history, not only of Semitic, but also of Aryan races, converges to Christ, and radiates again from Him. Above all else the religious life and mission of Israel culminated in

Him. He supplied what was lacking in Israel, fulfilled her highest hopes, and realized her noblest ideals. "The Israel of God" has indeed stood for grasping selfishness; but as the prophetic teaching developed, its conception of Israel grew in purity and beauty. They came to imagine the nation in its internal social life as the incarnate righteousness of God, and in its mission to the world as His incarnate justice and love. Rather than lower their ideal, they narrowed the meaning of the term "Israel" to the godly kernel of the community, and finally transferred their hopes to the ideal person of the Messiah. In the New Testament Christ is identified both by Himself and by His disciples with the true Israel. Texts, which in the original apply to the nation, are quoted in reference to Christ. Hosea wrote of Israel "Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" St. Matthew uses the sentence of Christ. In the Old Testament Israel is the "Son of God," "the Vine," "the Lion," "the Flock of God," "the Suffering Servant"; in the New Testament these terms are used of Christ; He is "the Only-begotten Son of God," "the True Vine," "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," "the Lamb of God," the fulfilment of the prophecy in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.

Again we have in the Old Testament not only a collective ideal of Israel, gradually perfected and culminating in Christ as representing not merely Israel but mankind; the ideal Israel is also expressed in terms of representative classes of the community; the ideal society has ideal leaders. Christ is set forth in the New Testament as summing up in Himself the

attributes of these types of Hebrew character. For a time the great power for righteousness in the state promised to appear in the King, by whom the religious professions of the people were mainly determined. The Prophets express their hopes for the future under the figure of the King, the Anointed One, Messiah, Christ. When the Monarchy proved unequal to this great work, and men saw how much more powerful the religious influence of the Prophet was than that of the King, the Messianic conception was set forth in II Isaiah under the figure of the Prophet. Later on the religious destinies of Israel fell into the hands of the Priests, and Zech. vi. 12, 13, sees the Deliverer of Israel, the Branch, in the High Priest.[1] In the New Testament Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. There was another school of religious thought, standing apart from the Temple and the Prophets, occupying itself with practical life and philosophical speculation, represented by Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus. These writings are called, collectively, the Hebrew Wisdom. In the New Testament Christ is also the Wisdom of God. Not only is Christian doctrine heir of the hopes and ideals of Hebrew faith, but one of the most impressive features of the Preparation for the Advent is the way in which the age-long expectation of a Deliverance and a Deliverer found its express answer and fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. The streams of Hebrew religious thought and experience, starting from small beginnings, gather-

[1] If our present text is to be trusted.

ing volume as they flow onwards, unite at last in the great tide of thought and feeling which carried the Christian Faith in triumph through the world.

By way of brief summary:—We are delivered from many errors, from the delusion of supposed knowledge about the origins and early history of Israelite religion, which are left among the secret things of God; from baseless critical assumptions which involved an impossible and dislocated order of Revelation. Criticism has attained a large measure of knowledge of the true order. Unfounded claims to knowledge about persons and books have been set aside, and the range of certainty contracted, but within this range important advances have been made. The known points on the curve of the Divine Education of Man are not scattered along so large an arc as had been supposed, but they are more numerous and closer together; we can trace the curve with something like continuity, and have attained to some real knowledge of its character. Our knowledge does not go back so far in time nor include so long a list of historical persons and incidents, but our understanding of the method and purpose of Revelation has been deepened and extended. We are discovering how infinitely much God has revealed to us of the workings of His Providence; the methods by which He has taught men and enabled them to speak for Him; the wisdom and patience with which He has unfolded and unveiled the Gospel of His Kingdom; the marvellous dispensations by which He prepared the way for His Son. We are permitted to trace with growing clearness

the continuity of Revelation, and to carry our knowledge some stages back along the lines of the Divine Working. As we penetrate further and further into the truths that are becoming more accessible to us, and see infinite depths and heights still opening out beyond, we exclaim as of old, "Oh, the depth of the Power of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, His thoughts are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out!"

II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

WALTER FREDERIC ADENEY.

The New Testament.

THE purpose of this essay is to consider in what respects the authority of the New Testament appears to be affected by recent criticism. The discussion will naturally fall into two divisions. First, there is the historical authority according to which the New Testament is accepted as a record of facts; and secondly, there is the direct theological authority which is ascribed to its teachings.

I. HISTORICAL AUTHORITY.

In the first branch of our inquiry the word "authority" is simply used as it is employed for any other source of history; as, for instance, when we say that Dr. Brewer's collection of State Papers is an "authority" for the reign of Henry VIII. We must keep this point distinct from the higher consideration of the submission of our faith to New Testament doctrine. That we will take up later on. We cannot but feel, even while we are approaching it on this lower plane, that the New Testament is far more than a storehouse of materials for the scientific historian. Since it is the peculiarity of Christianity,

that, though it is the most spiritual faith the world has ever seen, it claims to stand on a foundation of visible facts, the question whether the New Testament can be relied on as a valid source of knowledge concerning the events it relates, is of far more than archæological interest; it is one of the most profound religious significance.

1. *Literary Authenticity.*—Let us begin by looking at the sources of our information. On the whole the prospect in this direction is decidedly reassuring. The movement of recent years has been towards more general agreement, and that on lines of greater historical credibility. The wildest theories have proved themselves to be gaseous by exploding.

(1) Take, for example, the simplification of the synoptic problem. During the first half of the present century advocates of every possible mutual relationship between the first three Gospels were contending for their rival schemes. But of late the atmosphere has cleared, and in the midst of the nebulous mass of floating theories, two distinct, luminous nuclei have appeared, gathering round them the various elements which hitherto had been tossing about in confusion. There is a growing agreement on the first great principle of explanation. It is now becoming generally perceived that "Mark" was the earliest written Gospel, and the basis of "Matthew" and "Luke." Further, though some are not yet willing to admit that in our "Mark" we possess the primitive form of the work, it is becoming more and more certain that any later redaction which it may have undergone has not

seriously modified it. Moreover, there is a growing opinion among critics that the hypothesis of a primitive Mark is purely gratuitous, that our Gospel is the genuine original book. This is Pfleiderer's view, and Pfleiderer can scarcely be regarded as a conservative critic.

The second point that is attracting very general agreement is, that some collection of the sayings of Christ, with connective narrative, perhaps written in the Aramaic language, is the basis of those parts of the first Gospel which were not derived from "Mark," and also of a considerable, though a smaller, section of "Luke." Now Papias, our oldest witness, mentions two primitive works—a report of the preaching of Peter by Mark, and "Oracles (λογία) of the Lord," compiled in Hebrew (Aramaic) by Matthew. It seems then that we are feeling our way towards the very books known to Papias, that man of the most ancient age, on the verge of the Apostolic era.

Here, however, an objection may be raised. The common synoptic narrative is seen to rest on a good foundation; the special contributions of St. Matthew are also felt to be of supreme value; but what of those portions of the synoptics which are not included in either of these circles—the material which cannot be gathered round either of the nuclei? For instance, there are the narratives of the birth and infancy of our Lord. These are not in "Mark." It would appear that they were not in the original Aramaic "Oracles of the Lord." "Matthew" and "Luke" contain independent accounts which do not show any trace of a common origin.

Of course the absence of authentication for a narrative is not in itself a reason for discrediting it. This simply means that we have not been supplied with the evidence which we could have desiderated. The narrative is not therefore the less historically true. Still it is not to be denied that we have not the same support for the records of the earliest scenes in the life of our Lord, that we possess for the period of His ministry. We might have anticipated this, for while the later events were set in the full blaze of public life and witnessed by an admiring band of disciples, the narratives of the infancy belong to the privacy of an obscure provincial home. But let us look the facts calmly and steadily in the face. The incomparable beauty of those sweet Bethlehem stories has passed into the very heart of Christendom. Still we may ask ourselves, what important truth, concerning our Lord's nature and work, is taught us by them which cannot be learnt elsewhere? The divinity of Christ, the reality of His human nature, the great wonder of the incarnation are all set forth with re-iterated emphasis in other parts of the New Testament, are all taught with the greatest clearness and force by St. Paul and St. John, although those Apostles never mention the narratives of the infancy. On the other hand, it is possible to accept these narratives in every detail and yet be a Unitarian. The earlier Socinians did so. Therefore, for the ends of religious knowledge, any questions which might be raised on the ground that the opening chapters of "Matthew" and "Luke" are not favoured with the specific authentication of the two primitive originals, need not be

regarded with any sense of disturbance. Meanwhile, it should be seen that the difficulties which have been suggested in regard to the narratives of the early days of our Lord are unfairly magnified, when these stories are torn out of the Gospels and examined apart from the subsequent history. The chief reason why credence can be given to them, while no one dreams of according it to the legends of the infancy of Cyrus or of Romulus and Remus, is that they form the prelude to a historical career which is even more marvellous. This position is strengthened when we compare our two New Testament accounts of the infancy of Jesus with the grotesque absurdities of the Apocryphal Gospels, which show to what lengths the pious imagination will go when it is not held in check by a regard for known facts.

(2) Another instance of the improving aspect of the inquiry as to the trustworthiness of the New Testament on grounds of literary authenticity may be seen in the clearing of the Johannine problem. During the present century a remarkable series of discoveries of long lost books has brought in at every step an accession of new evidence for the antiquity of the Fourth Gospel. The writings of Hippolytus, Tatian's *Diatessaron*, and quite recently "The Gospel according to Peter," have all contributed to the result arrived at on other grounds—such as the vindication of the Ignatian letters, the proof that Justin Martyr knew our Gospel, amply expounded by Dr. Ezra Abbott, etc.; so that the late date assigned to the work by Baur is no longer conceivable.

Then it is becoming clear that the local colouring, the minute correctness of detail, the luminous presentation of the scenes and the vivid portraiture of the characters, in a word the intense realism of the whole story, absolutely preclude the notion that it is a philosophical allegory. Ewald saw this from the point of view of one who was a master of the historical imagination, and Renan from the curious position of a writer who had the keenest eye for a true basis of facts on which to raise the airy fabric of his fancy. Hence the proposal to accept the narratives and reject the discourses. But the difficulty of such a solution is, that a similarity of style may be noticed throughout the book with a remarkable symmetry of design in the whole conception of it. We cannot dissect it so as to separate the history from the teaching, because the two elements are inextricably interwoven.

Perhaps one of the most interesting conclusions arrived at by the recent investigation of the Fourth Gospel is its essential agreement in doctrine with the synoptics, a conclusion which is clearly demonstrated in Wendt's brilliant work on the Teaching of Jesus,[1] and which is not less apparent in Beyschlag's careful and scholarly exposition.[2] The objection that in "John" we have another Christ—different from the Christ of the synoptics, has received a crushing blow in the demonstration that the teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is in full harmony with His teaching in the earlier gospels.

[1] *Der Inhalt der Lehre Jesu*, p. 652 ff.
[2] *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, vol. i. pp. 213-277.

On the other hand the peculiarities of this gospel are not to be denied, and they do not vanish on closer study. It is now more apparent than ever that a common style of language runs through the whole work ; the style is the same in the discourses and in the narrative portions, in the speeches of our Lord and in those of John the Baptist. Jesus, the Baptist, and the evangelist, use one and the same form of diction, and this is so peculiar that we meet with it nowhere except in the writings of St. John. We come across it again in St. John's epistles. So absolute is the identity of phrase, that in some cases we cannot tell where a speech of Christ or one of the Baptist ends, and where the comment of the evangelist begins. There is only one fair conclusion to be drawn from the indisputable facts of the case. The aged writer must have moulded his memories in his own peculiar literary style—quite unintentionally, quite unconsciously, no doubt ; but therefore only the more thoroughly. If the grammatical study of moods and tenses were the highest form of exegesis, we should have to confess that here Christ was lost in John. But this miserable verbal treatment of Scripture is directly condemned by our Lord, and immediately we discover that what we want in His teaching is the truth He reveals, our difficulty vanishes. The thoughts of the gospel are so great that they must be attributed to Jesus Christ ; the evangelist certainly believes that he derived them from his Master. If we could think him mistaken we should be driven to the monstrous conclusion that the scholar had a more lofty mind than his

Divine Teacher, and that, therefore, a greater than Christ was here. That would be a *reductio ad absurdum*. We have but one alternative, and to it we must resort. We are driven to the explanation that we have here the true teaching of Christ reflected in the mind of St. John, and reproduced in forms supplied by the vocabulary and syntax of the evangelist. The ideas are our Lord's; and these are the essential elements.

(3) One more instance may be cited to further illustrate our gain. It is now possible to put forth larger claims on behalf of the Pauline library, than were once thought to be quite safe. Have we not heard a little too much about "the four unquestionable epistles"—"the great quadrilateral of Christianity?" The impression unintentionally produced by the frequent insistence on the indubitable genuineness [1] of the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and the two Epistles to the Corinthians, is that these works are all that we can fairly rely on in studying St. Paul.

This is by no means the case. We are repeatedly called upon to see how the rash sharp-shooters of the first half of our century have been beaten back by the march of the trained army of criticism in the second half. First we have 1 Thessalonians, the earliest of St. Paul's extant writings, chiefly valuable on that account, because it enables us to trace the

[1] Space will not permit any discussion of the erratic hypothesis of Rudolf Steck, which represents the antipodes of Baur's theory. It cannot be reckoned as one of the *results* of serious criticism.

development of his views. English scholars were impressed by Dr. Jowett's powerful vindication of this little epistle, and now we see Baur's denial of it repudiated on the Continent among the least conservative of critics. Pfleiderer has no doubt about it. "Language," he says, "and thought throughout are quite Pauline." [1] It is wonderful that any question should have been raised about a work containing so little of a controversial doctrinal character, and so full of the spirit of the Apostle—so pulsating with his big heart-throbs—as the beautiful Epistle to the Philippians; but Baur rejected it. Now the vindication of the claims of this work is simply triumphant. Hilgenfeld, Hausrath, Holtzmann, Schenkel, and Pfleiderer are not names that suggest the bondage of orthodoxy; yet they are all ranged among its supporters. More recently fresh difficulties have been discovered; but they have not been able to make any great impression on students. In some respects the vindication of the Epistle to the Colossians is even more interesting, because this work had been described as a very late production full of advanced second-century gnosticism, and in style as well as thought quite un-Pauline. Our great scholar, Bishop Lightfoot, showed that the gnosticism it combats is of Jewish origin, and that all the peculiar features of the heresy can be traced back to the first century; and now H. von Soden distinctly pronounces for the genuineness of the epistle from the standpoint of severe scientific criticism.[2] The Epistle to the

[1] *Urchristenthum*, p. 75.
[2] Holtzmann, *Hand Commentar*, vol. iii., pp. 11-16.

Ephesians was once felt to be less doubtful than that to the Colossians. It is now rejected by Pfleiderer, H. von Soden, and Holtzmann; but even among these adverse critics we may see indications of increasing difficulties for their own position, for Holtzmann [3] proves that it must be put back at least as early as the beginning of the second century or even the end of the first. Now the chief objection to the epistle was based on its supposed references to a late form of gnosticism. But these must vanish with the acceptance of Holtzmann's date.

The vindication of the Pastoral Epistles has not proceeded with the same ease as that of the Letters to Churches. But even with these works the acerbity of criticism has been seriously diluted, and the anxiety of conservatism considerably allayed, by the establishment of views of the contents which simply demolish the chief ground of controversy. The battle raged round the question of the episcopate. Champions of this Church order appealed to the Pastoral Epistles as the bulwark of their position. Negative critics accepted their interpretation of the epistles, but reversed the argument; and reasoning from the known late origin of the episcopate, concluded that the epistles could not be genuine. Now the common ground of both parties has been swept from beneath their feet. Lightfoot and Hatch and Harnack have shown conclusively that there is no trace in these epistles of what we now understand by the episcopate. They do not know anything even of the episcopate of Ignatius, not to speak of that of

[3] *Einleitung*, 2nd edit. p. 261.

Cyprian. It would not be reasonable to suppose that this one consideration removes all difficulties in regard to the epistles. But if it must be conceded that here the defence has not yet made the progress that is apparent in regard to most of the Pauline Epistles, on the other hand the importance of the whole question of their genuineness has receded. They can no longer be used for the principal purpose which formerly led to the quotation of them. Employed as props for the defence of the episcopate they will pierce the hands of those who lean upon them. But apart from the question of ecclesiastical organization, these epistles do not set forth any great ideas which may not be well learnt from those writings the genuineness of which is fairly beyond question.

2. *Inherent historicity.*—Interesting and important in its way as the consideration of questions about dates and authorship may be, we must not fall into the delusion of supposing that the worth of the New Testament as an historical authority is wholly dependent upon them. For many of us there are other considerations—quite apart from points of purely literary criticism—to which far more value may be attached. The history may be regarded as its own vindication. It is like some exquisite organism which the naturalist knows must have enjoyed the functions of a rich full life, even though he may not be able to trace its pedigree or assign it to its correct *habitat.* The marvellous beauty of the details, the elaborate relationship of the several parts, the grand harmony of the whole prove beyond doubt

that we have here no clumsy counterfeit, no ghastly Frankenstein which pretends to be a life from heaven but is only a manufactured mockery. The historical imagination, which we claim to be one of the acquisitions of our own age, here comes to our assistance, and disposes of the dull devices by which it was once attempted to explain away the Gospel and Apostolic narratives.

(1) The most remarkable example of the failure of negative criticism may be seen in the successive futile attempts that have been made to follow it up by some constructive theory, which shall account for the existence of the gospel history, while denying the facts narrated therein. It has been clearly perceived that the investigator has not got to the end of his task when he has demolished the historical credibility of a narrative to his own satisfaction. He has still a tough bit of work before him. Now he is called upon to account for the existence of that narrative. We have the unique, the supremely beautiful, the overwhelmingly powerful portrait of Jesus Christ in our Gospels, and the most mordant criticism cannot dissolve it. How did it come there? If it was not painted from the life by the loving hands of men who were familiar with every trait in the countenance of their Master, how was it painted? Whence arose the great Christ idea? Whence the novelty and variety and sublimity of the whole Christ-picture? These obstinate questions must be answered before the task of criticism is finished.

The last hundred years has witnessed a series of

attempts at rehabilitating the model from which it is asserted the artists painted their more or less fancy pictures. The result is that, like the line of shadowy kings in "Macbeth," a series of imaginary Christs has floated before our eyes and then melted into thin air. Neither the meagre outline supplied by the rationalism of Paulus, nor Strauss' mythical hero, nor the romantic creation of Renan's "sweet Galileean dream," nor even Keim's supernatural man has been able to justify its originator by satisfying the demands of the wonderful gospel portrait. The failure of imagination has thrown us back on history. We can only account for the picture by believing in the original.

(2) On the other side of the field a most inspiriting advance has been made all along the line, and the result is a deepening sense of appreciation of the person and character of our Lord Jesus Christ, the truths He taught and the works He accomplished in the past, and is accomplishing now. Never was His name held in such high reverence as it is to-day. The recovery of the lost Christ by Martin Luther was followed by a hard age of dogmatics, and that by its inevitable consequence, a superficial age of indifference; but both of these have passed, and they have been succeeded by a day of rejoicing in the unveiling of such a vision of the ever-living Christ as promises to regenerate the life of Christendom. Men and women are now understanding better than ever what was the real character of that wonderful life among the hills of Galilee. They are learning to look the human Jesus in the face and to feel the

firm touch of His brotherly hand. At the same time the great ideas of Christ are taking possession of society in a way hitherto scarcely hoped for.

Quite outside the range of confessed discipleship, in circles of society where the Church is held in no great honour, the name of Christ is winning its way as the name of the Highest and Best. This distinction between Christ and the Church, this understanding of the independent greatness and goodness of the Man of Nazareth, whatever the world may think of the theology and ecclesiasticism of His followers, is one of the marked features of our day. Its chief result should be to prepare the world for His coming in full power to reign over all. But it must have many secondary effects of no small moment, and one of these will be to increase our sense of the credibility of the Gospel. The misfortune of the Eighteenth Century Apologists was that they seemed more anxious to prove the truth of their religion than to help to put it in practice, or, at all events, that they were able to set forth so little charm in it—that they perceive so little soul in it, so little power and passion—that people asked what was the use of proving the truth of so uninteresting a creed? Now the energy of the Christian Gospel is being felt and its excellency acknowledged—a change which cannot but react on our conception of the truth that thus lives and works. This applies most of all to the heart and essence of our religion, the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we see that He is so great and powerful, it is only the insanity of credulity that will allow us to believe Him to

be the shadow of a myth, the allegorical lay figure of a doctrinal tendency, or the hero of a sentimental romance. Thus the actual perception of the supreme worth of Jesus Christ goes far to substantiate the Gospel records in which He is portrayed.

(3) The inherent historicity of the New Testament in its description of the age of the Apostles is also becoming more apparent. This is seen in the collapse of what is known as the Tübingen hypothesis. We are much indebted to Baur, the celebrated author of that hypothesis; the conservative school would have been wiser if it had calmly examined what he had to say and opened its eyes to the real discoveries he was making, instead of shouting itself hoarse in defence of every jot and tittle of its old uncritical opinions. To Baur we owe an incalculable debt of gratitude for teaching us to read our New Testament from the inside. He has shown us how to look for the minds of the writers, and how to detect the processes of thought out of which their writings grew. Nevertheless, his extravagant theories have been broken up and shattered. With the almost inevitable habit of an inventor, he has ridden his inventions too far until he has made imagination take the place of perception. That the twelve Apostles excommunicated St. Paul, denounced him as a false Apostle, and called the communion of his converts a synagogue of Satan; that St. Paul in turn anathematized the twelve Apostles, and despised them as false brethren who desired to make a fair show in the flesh; that the Church was then rent in twain by a fearful feud, which set the two

parties in direct antagonism to one another, a feud which lasted on till down in the second century—this is now felt to be at best a wild exaggeration of the facts.

A comparatively new Dutch school is inheriting the doubtful honour of taking the lead in the negative movement. Individual critics will continue to discover fresh difficulties, and it cannot yet be said that the inquiry is ended. Still the field is distinctly clearer than it was fifty years ago. Erratic ideas have been weeded out, never to be entertained again.

But, it will be said, the result is not all gain. On the side of conservative scholarship reluctant concessions have been made, and ground which once was held as of the very citadel has come to be abandoned. There is another way of regarding this change. Until recently the bulk of the conservative theologians simply deplored the progress of criticism as that of "neologian" heresy. This may have been pious, but it was not vigorous. The more able men, no doubt, addressed themselves to the task of fighting the hydra-headed monster; but that is just how they came to make little progress. They could not understand the newer criticism, because they only aimed at combating it. Controversy has always been the bane of theology. But of late a more humble and patient attitude has been observable on the conservative side. It is no longer possible to oppose the scientific view to the orthodox view, because the scientific method is better understood among the conservative scholars. Un-

doubtedly this has led to the granting of some concessions. But in exchange for the loss on minor points we have gained one incalculable advantage—a sure footing on the free soil of open discussion. It is as though the preacher had stepped down from the pulpit where he might denounce all opponents to his heart's content, in the comfortable assurance that the decorum of public worship forbad a reply, and had taken up his position in the market-place to enter into conversation with his neighbours on equal terms.

II. Theological Authority.

A further question now presents itself. Does the New Testament contain a binding authority for the faith and conduct of Christendom in all ages? It was the theory of Catholicism that this was the case with the whole Bible, although the denial of the right of private interpretation and the cumbering of the ground with claims of Church and Patristic authority tended to obscure the importance of it. Protestants accepted this theory, accentuated it, and cleared it of all rivals. So long as the Bible was accepted as a wholly supernatural book, and almost treated as though it had been written by the very finger of God like the mysterious words on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, or handed to us straight from heaven like the tables of stone, no question could be felt as to its authority. But the moment we admit the conclusions of criticism that tend to modify any such view, the question of the ground and extent of

the authority of Scripture starts up and demands to be confronted.

1. *The Basis of this Authority.*—We have first to inquire on what grounds the New Testament can be regarded as an authority in regard to doctrine and conduct.

The most serious difficulty that has been brought forward in face of this claim of late years is suggested by the variations observable between the ideas of the several writers. We need not stay now to discuss these variations in detail. Surely in any fair court of judgment, it must be conceded that their existence is clearly proved. Nothing has been more disastrous to the cause of intelligent faith in the truthfulness of Scripture than the miserable efforts of shortsighted apologists to explain away all diversities, till it would seem that two and two might make five, in some mystical sense, whatever they amount to in worldly arithmetic.

It cannot be denied that we meet with different types of teaching in the New Testament. We have the original teaching of Jesus Christ; and we have the Apostolic types known as Jacobean, Petrine, Pauline, Alexandrine, and Johannine. The attempts to make St. James speak like St. Paul, or St. Paul like St. John, have only resulted in confusing the characteristic lines of the teaching of each great leader of the church, and so in reducing the ideas of the New Testament to a minimum. Immediately we are prepared to recognize the distinction of types in Apostolic teaching, the whole of the New Testament is lit up with a new and living interest, and its several

parts stand out before us sharply defined and powerfully characterized. This at least is an advantage.

But, it may be urged, what we gain in vivacity and vigour of treatment is more than counterbalanced by our loss of certainty and authority. Now if every sentence of the New Testament aimed at giving us a complete and final utterance on the subject it dealt with, this objection would be fatal. The assumption that it does so, however, has yet to be established. Meanwhile, may not the revelation of truth be all the more full on account of the fact that it presents itself to us from several points of view? A different treatment is not necessarily a contradictory one. We often need to be reminded of the fable of the Knight and the Shield. It must be allowed that in the great truths which transcend our experience, there may be antinomies which would be resolved in a higher synthesis if we could only attain to it. On the plane of visible human experience many diversities may be accounted for more simply. It would appear that the truths of the New Testament come to us through the minds of men, not as water passes through a tube—unchanged; nor as air which takes its musical note entirely from the shape of an organ pipe; but in an intermediate way, so that while they wear traces of their Divine generation—a point we must consider a little later on, they also show signs of their earthly birth. Moreover it is not so easy to eliminate the human element as some have supposed. This is not a question of melting the ore to separate the precious metal from the dross. The human element is not dross; at worst it is an alloy, and as such a

very valuable part of the New Testament, though in mistaken attempts to honour the Scriptures it has been depreciated; and the blending of the two elements is so close and vital, that we could no more look at the one without the other, than we could perceive the sun-track on the sea after the waters had disappeared. When we understand the different and specific characters and lives of the men of the New Testament, we are best able to reach the secret of the truths it was given them to learn in the school of experience and to teach in the world of action.

A comparison of the various types of New Testament doctrine shows us, further, that the Christian idea is there presented to us in different stages of development. The speeches of St. Peter recorded in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, represent a more primitive type than we see in the first Epistle ascribed to that apostle. The Epistle of St. James is elementary in its treatment of the Christian life and truth; while in St. Paul's Epistles we have a rich elaboration of doctrine. St. Paul himself shows an advance from the comparative simplicity of what he wrote to the Thessalonians [1] to the profound ideas of the Epistle to the Romans; and again, a further advance, especially in Christology, in the Epistle to the Colossians. In St. John we not only have a choice and characteristic type of Christian doctrine; it is evident that we have also a later

[1] Even if we follow Professor Bruce in holding that 1 Thessalonians is a sort of primer, designedly elementary, containing "milk for babes," and that St. Paul's own knowledge was more advanced when he wrote it, the transition to later works shows development in *teaching*.

development. We are quite accustomed to this representation of progress in revelation; we see that it is in harmony with the Divine method in nature; but still we may be slow to perceive what it involves. Different stages of progress viewed side by side necessarily present divergent aspects; sometimes they appear to be quite contradictory. Progress is not a smooth movement; it involves conflict, a struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest—repudiation of the old and painful assimilation of the new. The garment is rent; the wine-skin is burst.

Taking these two facts into account—diversity of type, and the development of doctrine—we need not be alarmed if the voices of the New Testament do not always speak in unison. It is quite possible that there may have been coldness, suspicion, and even collision between the Apostles at times, owing to these two causes. Probably St. James never reached the standpoint of St. Paul and never approved of it. But this does not affect the authority of St. James to speak up to the measure of his inspired knowledge, nor that of St. Paul to lead us on to higher truths in the path of his keener inspiration.

So much by way of clearing the ground. Now we have to turn to the positive side of the question, and endeavour to arrive at a statement of the reasons for the sake of which authority in regard to truth and conduct may be ascribed to the New Testament.

(1) It is one of the many notes of advance in our own day that while we are coming to have a higher estimate of the supreme importance of the person and life of Jesus Christ in the whole range of Christian

experience, we are also being led to see more clearly that He is the centre and source of truth. If the New Testament can be accepted as an authority before which we bow, this is chiefly because it enshrines the image of Christ. Not only does it contain the full and early reports of His sayings, but in its presentation of His life and character it helps us to understand Him as no other writings can pretend to do. Thus the foundation of the authority of the New Testament is the authority of Jesus Christ. Now in the region of truth authority depends not upon dignity of office, nor upon exaltation of nature, but just simply upon knowledge. He is an authority to us in regard to any subject, who must be confessed to know about it more than we do, and concerning whose correctness of information we are fully assured. If our Lord speaks with authority it is because He knows what He undertakes to teach, and because His disciples are persuaded to repose confidence in His grasp of the subject. How then is this persuasion reached?

The first and firmest reason for accepting the authority of Jesus Christ in the region of truth is that which impressed His hearers when they contrasted His teaching with that of the Scribes. Although He had not been through the schools, although the external aspect of His life was that of a provincial artisan, men and women were forced to believe that He was a teacher sent from God, on account of the sheer weight of His utterances. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" He asked, in regard to other teachers, and unprejudiced hearers

applied the same maxim to His own claims. In other words He proved Himself to be a master of religious truth. We must often have been struck with the serene assurance with which He speaks. He never shows Himself at a loss, never hesitates, is never perplexed by the objections of the shrewdest opponent. He moves with perfect ease among the great mysteries of existence which baffle our most searching inquiries and send us back humbled and despairing. We do not see Him balancing probabilities, weighing contradictory arguments, suspending His judgment, venturing on tentative propositions, feeling His way with slow caution. He does not present us with His "opinions," His "views." His tone is decided, positive, affirmative. He lays down His great assertions like indisputable axioms. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is His natural introduction to some vast, comprehensive aphorism. St. Paul shows that he had this great characteristic of our Lord in mind when he wrote, "the Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . . was not yea and nay, but in Him is yea."[1]

The *prima facie* objection to this position as a ground for believing in the authority of Jesus Christ will occur to every one. The most dogmatic speakers are not always the most trustworthy. On the contrary, people seem to cherish assurance with regard to their own notions in exact proportion to their ignorance, and those who have attained to a wide view of things are generally the most cautious in venturing on any positive assertion. Most certainly we cannot be ex-

[1] 2 Cor. i. 19.

pected to yield full and implicit credence to any teacher—even the greatest—simply on the ground that he never betrays a shadow of doubt. But the persuasion that anybody is a master of his subject does not arise out of the positiveness of his dicta. It is gathered from a consideration of his whole method of treatment, and largely from his self-revelation. The supremacy of our Lord in this respect persuades us to believe that He must be a master of religious truth, and it is because we cannot escape from the conviction of His mastery that we stoop to the yoke of His authority. Nevertheless, it is a very significant fact that though our Lord spoke with positiveness, and persuaded His hearers with the very tone of conviction that rang through His words, He did not attempt to stifle their reason or crush down their own perceptions of truth. The hard, dogmatic insistence on certain propositions, which are served out ready dressed and only to be swallowed by the passive recipient, is wholly alien to His method. Truth which is taken in without any personal effort is never assimilated, is never really absorbed. Jesus Christ was far too great a teacher to be satisfied with this mechanical acquiescence in His doctrine. He aimed at winning the whole man—the reason and conscience and heart, as well as the consent of the will. It was not enough that His disciples should assent to His teaching; they must see the truth of it, willingly acquiesce in it, grasp it for themselves, move freely in it, breathe it as an atmosphere, make it part of their being, convert it into their own thoughts.

Therefore we find Him drawing analogies by comparisons with nature and the practices of men, and appealing to the experience and judgment of His hearers. It was customary for Him to introduce a subject with the phrase, "What man of you," etc.? to call to mind some reasonable human action, and so to lead to the inference that the divine action under similar circumstances could not be less reasonable. This is not the method of the dogmatist. Jesus only appears to be dogmatic because He is positive; a little patient discipleship reveals to us His "sweet reasonableness." But if He addresses the intellect and the conscience it is plain that He expects us to use those faculties in our dealings with His words.

All this might have been inferred from a consideration of our Lord's teaching as it is recorded in the gospels, and without any reference to its effects in subsequent history. But our inquiry cannot be arrested at this stage. Jesus Christ is not a teacher whose utterances have been buried for centuries like the brick libraries at Babylon, like the seeds bound up with Egyptian mummies, only to be tested in our own later age. They have been tried all through the centuries. It is true they have often been grievously misapprehended, at best they have been adopted with lamentable imperfection, and the disciples of Christ have only walked in His footsteps with a lame and halting gait. Still, among all the weeds that have been permitted to grow so rankly in the garden of His church, His great ideas have proved their vitality, have blossomed in fragrance and beauty, and have borne rich fruit. Many people

admit this with regard to the ethics of the "Sermon on the Mount," while refusing to acknowledge any other branch of our Lord's teaching. But such critics can have taken only a superficial view of the subject, for nothing is more wonderful than the organic unity of the truth that is revealed to us in His life and works. His plainest moral precepts have roots that penetrate to the deepest mysteries of life, and flowers that climb up to the highest regions of the Divine glory. His words, too, spring from His life, and we cannot take His teaching without receiving Himself. Indeed, His greatest teaching is in the pictures of His life, His cross, His resurrection—in the very vision of His countenance. Thus the historical confirmation of His teaching in any one branch of it—as in the ethics just now especially valued—becomes a confirmation of His whole authority.

We cannot pass from this branch of our subject without glancing at a point which has obtained fictitious importance of late, as it seems to some of us, through the fatally unwise handling of it by men who venture to pose as the champions of our Lord's infallibility. If we are not to indulge in those quibbles which simply destroy the gospels as history in the very attempt to save their contents from what is thought to be some disrespect, we must see that they suggest a limitation to our Lord's knowledge on earth. The often-quoted reference of Jesus to His ignorance of the day and hour of His glorious return, is only in accordance with many human traits in His thought, as when He asks for information about simple facts, and when He expresses surprise and

amazement. Is not this limitation a proof of the mistake of appealing to our Lord as an authority on extraneous matters which He never undertakes to teach? We do not find Him sitting down to instruct His disciples in geology and literary history. Then is it not unreasonable to look to Him for a pronouncement on these matters? is it not unfair to take His employment of the Bible as a Divine seal set to the scientific accuracy, say, of the account of the order of creation in Genesis, or His reference to the Pentateuch or to the Psalms, with the use of the popular titles of these works, as a solemn vindication of their Mosaic or Davidic authorship? We have no proof that His knowledge on earth extended to these and kindred topics. But if this is the case, the attempt to strain the authority of our Lord beyond its natural claims must be most disastrous. Those people who practise it are unconsciously pursuing a subtle means of undermining the whole influence of Christ over the minds of indiscriminate thinkers. As they value the religious authority of Jesus Christ they would do well to pause and consider whither their unwise and unwarrantable assumptions are tending.

The positive work of our Lord is all concerned with the great world of religion in which He has proved His invincible mastery. His teaching on this loftiest and most difficult of all topics has stood the test of ages; it has faced hatred, scorn, neglect, misapprehension, perversion; of late it has had the penetrating rays of criticism—fiercer than any light that beats upon a throne—turned upon it in the most

searching scrutiny; and to-day we see it more potent and dominant than in any previous period of the history of Christendom.

(2) In the next place it has to be considered that while the central gem of the New Testament is the divine teaching of Jesus Christ, a large part of the volume is occupied with the acts and speeches and writings of the Apostles, and it is important to settle well in our minds the grounds of their authority. In the first instance they were simple witnesses of the life and work and especially of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But in course of time they became great teachers. This fact is most conspicuous in the case of St. Paul. Now St. Paul had not been a companion and witness of Christ after the manner of the other disciples. His enemies were not slow to point out the apparently fatal flaw in his credentials. The way in which he met their opposition shows that he clearly perceived the point of the objection urged against his claim. "Am I not an Apostle? *have I not seen Jesus our Lord?* are not ye my work in the Lord?"[1]

He saw that a true Apostle must have been commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself, and in regard to this condition he felt he had a claim which could not be put forth on behalf of a man who had been elected by the church.[2] Thus he describes himself as "Paul, an Apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)."[3] Therefore the authority of

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 1. [2] Acts i. 21, 22.
[3] Gal. i. 1.

the Apostles will mean much to us just in proportion as we believe they were in touch with Christ.

The same idea may be approached from another point of view. The early witnesses waited at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high. No longer present bodily, Jesus Christ now influenced them through the Holy Spirit. It is clear that the Apostles claim to speak to us with a certain amount of authority in virtue of the gifts which they received from the Divine Spirit. But here it may be said we are arguing in a circle, because we have yet to find grounds for the assurance that they were thus supernaturally endowed. Can we not meet this difficulty by resorting to what may be called "the principle of a sufficient reason"? St. Paul's second vindication of his Apostleship before the Corinthians, in the passage already quoted, is to be found in the triumphant inquiry, "Are ye not my work in the Lord?" This is a skilful way of presenting the case. The Corinthians could not deny that they were St. Paul's converts. Therefore any depreciation of him would react on them. They were not the men to make light of their own religious status; but the more value there was in this the more value must be ascribed to the Apostolic powers in which it originated. In other words, St. Paul's second vindication of his Apostleship was found in its effects. The same method may be applied to the position of the Apostles generally so far as that is represented in the New Testament, for do not the fruits of the Spirit prove the existence of the life of the Spirit? The area of this influence is immensely enlarged when we

consider the subsequent history of Christendom. That the enlightening and uplifting influence of Christianity is not confined to what we learn from the four Gospels, that it is also derived from the work and teaching of the Apostles, cannot for a moment be denied. The mistake has been that men have been inclined to draw too exclusively from these secondary sources, and have not paid sufficient attention to the direct teaching of Jesus Christ, to the meaning of His life and the lessons of His cross as these may be learnt from the Gospels. All the more, then, may we be assured that the Spirit of Christ must have been in the Apostles, and just in proportion to their possession of this Spirit will be their authority to those of us who have first of all bowed in submission to the authority of Jesus Christ Himself.

Here, however, we must not neglect to notice the constant habit of the Apostles in appealing to the judgment of their readers. St. Paul, in particular, does this most markedly. His most vigorous and decisive presentation of doctrine is in the form of elaborate arguments. We may sometimes think that his direct personal insight is more keen than his logic is sound; and we may be inclined to accept his conclusions without following every step by which they have been reached. His rabbinical methods may seem to us quaint and inconclusive; his analogies inaccurate; his exegesis of Scripture a departure from the original meaning of the text. Still it cannot be denied that on the whole he seizes his subject with the grip of a most powerful mind. But this intel-

lectual grasp of truth and this controversial way of urging it upon his readers show that the Apostle expected them to use their minds in weighing what he said. He was dealing in irony when he dictated the words, "I speak as to wise men; *judge ye* what I say!"[1] But he would not have used these words at all if he had expected a total suspense of private judgment on the part of the men and women he was addressing. His Epistles do not read like Papal Bulls.

(3) There is still one more question to be faced before we can turn from this line of thought. There are parts of the New Testament that contain neither reports of the actions and words of Jesus Christ like the gospels, nor records of the doings and utterances of Apostles. Thus we have the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews. St. James does not claim to be an Apostle. Possibly some of the Epistles are pseudonymous; at all events, it cannot be asserted that the names attached to *all* of them are quite beyond doubt. How, then, can we attach any authority to such writings?

The statement—true and important in its way—that the New Testament is not one book, but a collection of separate writings, is in danger of being so pressed as to hide another equally true and significant consideration. The New Testament is not a congeries of heterogeneous tracts and pamphlets that have nothing in common but the binding of the volume. This is not the place for discussing the formation of the canon. Without now attempting to

[1] 1 Cor. x. 15.

justify all its admissions and omissions, we may still see that a certain unity of character pervades the whole. We are impressed with the fulness, the force, the elevation, the inspiring influence of the New Testament. So many of its ideas commend themselves at once to our judgment of what is most true and right, so many more grow upon us as our spiritual experience deepens and ripens, that we should be prepared to receive the rest with a reverence which we do not dream of according to any other literature. There is assuredly a self-evident worth in the New Testament, and this we feel as much in the fresh, searching thoughts, say, of the Epistle to the Hebrews as in some of the writings which can be assigned to known Apostles.

Further, it would be carrying the privilege of private judgment to a mad excess of independence to refuse any deference to the opinions of other people on this large and difficult question. Most of us have our favourite books, which we select according to our own taste and appetite, not caring that we may be accounted eccentric so long as we get the light or the solace which our chosen authors afford us; but we do not therefore assume to pass an absolute judgment on the world's literature solely according to our own private impressions of it. We are bound to confess that there is great weight in the accumulated judgment of the centuries on the merits of books. We may prefer the last sensational novel to "The Iliad," but we do not venture to say on that account that Homer should be expelled from the temple of fame and our mushroom

author enthroned in his place. We may not like the classics; we may not perceive their excellences; but we cannot deny that there must have been some great characteristics in them—inscrutable as these may be to us—for the sake of which they have received their high rank. Now, may we not compare canonical with classical literature in this respect? The peculiar excellences of the two groups of books are very different. We do not propose to make a Bible of the classics, and we are quite ready to perceive in the language of Scripture barbarisms which may set the teeth of a refined scholar on edge. Neither are the judges the same in the two cases. The pre-eminence of the classics is literary; literary excellence, of course, must be weighed by men of literary taste and culture, by literary experts. But the pre-eminence of the New Testament is religious, and religious excellence can only be judged by people who are experts in religion. The expert in religion is not necessarily the ecclesiastic whose business is with the administration of the external affairs of the Church, nor the theologian who is a student of its dogmas; he is the person of deep religious experience. Therefore for our present purpose we cannot look to the decrees of councils in which too often the most worldly passions have raged between rival Church dignitaries, nor to the writing of ancient Fathers whose high status is often due to their learning, their intellect, or their energy, rather than to any more spiritual qualities. Our experts may be found in very humble quarters, among the simple, the illiterate, the very babes and sucklings, as regards

secular knowledge. Wherever men and women have lived in the power of the Unseen, they have cultivated the faculty to recognize the truth of the word that speaks of that higher World. Now these religious experts have given the stamp of their assent to the divine authority of the New Testament.

2. *The Scope of this Authority.*—All that we have reached so far will lay us open to a charge of much indefiniteness in respect to the range of the authoritative teachings of the New Testament unless we can supplement it by a clear demarcation of its boundaries. The argument does not go so far as to demonstrate an illimitable authority. On the face of it, then, some may think this result is an indication of a grave defect in the newer views of Scripture. The time has come when the position should be clearly stated, and its consequences unflinchingly deduced.

(1) As far as we can see, the authority of the New Testament is limited to its subject-matter, religion. We have no evidence that the writings that are contained in this wonderful volume utter a single authoritative word on any point of physical science, archæology, literary criticism, or the whole range of what we commonly call "secular" knowledge. On all these topics they speak the common language of their day, and there is not the slightest reason to assert that the writers knew more than their contemporaries or that they were miraculously preserved from casual inaccuracies. On this side, then, we have a limitation —a reduction of what was once regarded as the domain of Scriptural teaching. But a little reflection should convince us that the limitation does not

involve any loss that is to be deplored. On the contrary, the perception of it is a great gain. While the New Testament was resorted to as an Encyclopædia of universal knowledge, the reader's attention was distracted, and he was tempted to neglect its infinitely momentous message to his soul in searching for hints and cryptograms to satisfy his curiosity concerning matters of secular interest. But now, since he is warned of the mistake which this habit implies, he is saved from a mischievous distraction, and therefore he is all the more urgently directed to attend to the really great truths which it is the mission of the book to impress.

The authority of the New Testament is limited to religion—limited to *religion!* What an ample domain is here assigned to it! The immense significance of anything like an authority on this one subject cannot possibly be over-estimated. If there is any means of knowing God and the way to Him, the meaning and purpose of life on earth and the secret of the future, is not this incomparably more valuable than notes and queries about Semitic antiquities? What if the sprinkling of dates and names from Hebrew registers that is found in the New Testament may be in some confusion, shall we break our hearts over the discovery of the fact when we know that this wonderful book contains the key to the riddle of the Universe?

But now it is objected from another direction that this representation of the situation is hard and narrow and one-sided. It is maintained that we cannot possibly have the sort of spiritual revelation we want

in a book. This cannot be conveyed to us in words. Where bread is begged, a stone is offered.

The objection is true when raised against that literal view of Scripture which regards it as a string of verbal answers to the soul's inquiries wrapped up in so many definite "texts." But if we are to take the New Testament as a record of facts and thoughts, the real revelation will consist in those facts and thoughts which must be appropriated and assimilated before a gleam of the revelation itself breaks upon us.

Again, it may be said that we are not shut up to the one revelation of Scripture. God looks out on us from the glowing face of Nature and whispers to us in the deep recesses of consciousness. The wide-spread area of revelation was distinctly recognized by St. Paul in the opening passage of his Epistle to the Romans. But we must judge of the practical utility of this magnificent fact by its results. That it ought to have meant much to the world can be freely acknowledged. We must confess that it was only an effect of some strange blindness with which the greater part of the human race was smitten, that the perception of the highest spiritual truths was confined to a little group of provincials on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, while the keenest intellects of India and Greece groped after them in vain; but that they did grope after them in vain cannot be denied. This is a matter to be settled inductively. An induction of the world's mythology and philosophy does not bring out the results which we might have expected from our belief in the revelations of nature and

conscience. We may thank Prof. Max Müller and his collaborators in the fascinating field of Comparative Religion for the valuable ideas which they have recovered from the Vedic hymns, the Zend-avesta, the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead, the Iliad, etc. We may be grateful for the high moral perceptions that loom behind the irony of the Greek dramatists—the sombre laws of retribution which Æschylus perceived, the more human principles discovered by Sophocles. We may follow the questions of Socrates with the eagerness of disciples, or, with our own Milton,—

> "Unsphere
> The spirit of Plato, to unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal mind, that hath forsook
> Her mansion in her fleshly nook."

The time has gone when we could be so foolish as to think of honouring Christianity by depreciating what we regarded as its rivals. On the contrary, we can freely pursue the choicest thought of the world, rejoicing to recognize its excellences. The culture of soul as well as of intellect gained in the process will be incalculable. Nevertheless, it cannot be shown that the direct results in knowledge will be very great. We cannot well go beyond those large-minded, liberal-spirited Alexandrine Fathers, who saw that just as God had given the law to the Jews, so He had given philosophy to the Greeks—to be a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ.

(2) There is a certain class of people to which all that may be said in this direction will be sadly

defective. It consists of men and women who worry over details to the neglect of larger considerations. These people always read the New Testament through a microscope. To them the first error in a date or a name is a hopeless stumbling-block. If you cannot demonstrate the complete inerrancy of the book they can make no way with it. They cannot see that the daring inaccuracies of a great painter allow of at least as true a portrait of his subject as the lineal exactness of the photographer, who scrupulously records every wrinkle of the countenance, but who cannot express the soul. They have no eye for the painting. They sigh for the photograph ; they pine for the wrinkles. To such people criticism is necessarily perplexing. It seems to them that inch by inch it is cutting away the ground beneath their feet till they fear they will be swept into a sea of hopeless confusion. Their mistake is in measuring their ground by the inch, and they do so because they persist in poising themselves on the margin of their inheritance, instead of plunging into the interior to reap the rich harvests that extend by the league over the length and breadth of the land. The perplexity of these troubled souls comes from the lack of a sense of proportion. Their views are Chinese. The best help for them would lie in a course of lessons in perspective. Their nervousness is the result of an optical illusion. Still even their distress of mind may not be wholly mischievous, because all this painful experience may be a necessary condition of their deliverance from the yoke of the letter.

(3) But it will be urged by many that their difficulty is not found among the petty details that only hang on the fringe of the subject. It is concerned with the main body of the New Testament utterances, and it consists in the perception that even here we have no absolute authority. These perplexed people crave some rigorous external authority, the distinctness of whose utterances shall for ever silence all questioning, and they cannot find this in the New Testament as it is now regarded. Verbal infallibility gave it them. But all that has been put forth here in support of the high claims of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles falls short of what they want as the end of all controversy—an unmistakable and unanswerable court of appeal.

Now, is this a fair complaint? Is any such authority to be found in regard to a single branch of knowledge? Science claims a degree of accuracy that is not generally accorded to theology; yet there is in point of fact no absolute authority in science. The one science which is even formally absolute is mathematics; but mathematics is wholly based on hypothetical grounds. There is no such thing in the universe as a perfect circle or a truly straight line. Moreover, mathematics starts from axioms which must be taken for granted, and our ground for believing in which has given rise to some of the most keenly disputed controversies of metaphysics. If then this absoluteness is not to be found anywhere else, should we be astonished or disappointed at not discovering it in the matter of religious knowledge?

Further, it should be seen that in the nature of things no external authority can possibly be absolute in regard to spiritual truth. There is no correlation between the factors. The external authority is concrete and material; the spiritual truth is intangible, and not to be expressed in terms of the senses. Thus the authority can only speak by hints and suggestions. It can only awaken a perception of the truth to which it directs attention; it cannot really convey that truth. For those people who expect dogma to be ladled out to them all ready prepared, so that they have only to imbibe it without an effort, these suggestions are vexatious; but we have no right to demand an indulgence of our intellectual and spiritual indolence.

The sense of disappointment which some may feel at this result should vanish altogether, and give place to the satisfaction of sufficiency when attention is given to another consideration.

The absolute authority for which some people seek is really not needed to serve any serious practical purpose. The New Testament is not to be expounded as the answer to all the questions of the curious. We may believe that we find in it the solution of the most momentous problems; but even then its reply is not directed to the mere settlement of debate. It aims at practical guidance. We turn to the truths of this book that we may find in them weapons for the great war with sin and misery, instruments for winning the world to Christ, tools for shaping the ideas and conduct of Christian men and women. If the authority is sufficient to guide our

actions in these great concerns, that is all we need ; it is all that we have in the affairs of daily life. The inquiry after an absolute authority therefore becomes purely academic.

It may be right to go further, and say that belief in such an authority is positively hurtful, because it tends to check the growth of the spiritual faculties. The great teachers of Scripture appeal, as we have seen, to our judgment, to our conscience to our whole spiritual nature. They expect us to use our highest powers in grasping and weighing and assimilating what they teach. By this process our own nature is to be cultivated and developed, and the truth itself understood and valued. To discard the method evidently favoured by the writers of the New Testament, and to burden ourselves with a leaden mass of undigested teaching, would be the surest way to crush the capacity for spiritual thought. The artificial treatment of Scripture by Rabbinism was rebuked by our Lord because it tended in that direction.[1] We may make a fetich of truth. Truth itself is only fruitful when it ministers to life ; it is barren when it is substituted for life. The gift of God is eternal life, not absolute certitude, and the "words" of Christ are valuable, because they are "spirit" and "life"—because they awaken life in us by the touch of the Spirit of God that dwells in them.

There is a condition of soul to which the direct revelation of the highest truth is no better than the casting of pearls before swine. If the truth could be

[1] John v. 39, 40.

fully received by persons in that deplorable state, it would be to aggravate their symptoms till they were brought near to the sin against the Holy Ghost, the conscious, wilful perversion of good into evil. Happily, however, such a reception is impossible. St. Paul tells us that the things of the Spirit must be spiritually discerned, that the unspiritual mind cannot even perceive them.[1] His statement is not to be set aside as an utterance of proud, unpractical mysticism, for it is entirely in harmony with our experience in all other regions of thought. The Apostle does not expect the highest ideas to be accepted or even understood by people who are entirely out of sympathy with them; but do we not always feel that appreciation is dependent on sympathy? The born Aristotelian never receives Plato. Byron called Wordsworth "vulgar," and described him among the Lake poets as,—

"The meanest object of the lowly group,'

so absolutely blind was his earthly mind to the loftiest soul of his age!

Now is not the principle that can be so readily recognized in its application to philosophy and poetry equally valid in the region of religion? Here, however, the faculty of appreciation is not a natural gift bestowed on some and denied to others. On the contrary, it is within the reach of men and women of every temperament, and yet it is not developed in the normal condition of any. According to St. Paul, it is the outgrowth

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of an immediate contact of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man. The inevitable consequence is that the New Testament can only be an inspired book for readers who are inspired. Therefore it will always be impossible to produce a satisfactory demonstration of its authority in the court of bare intellectualism. We must not be astonished or impatient if some people do not yet find that it sheds any rare and precious radiance upon their path. But neither must we allow this lack of appreciation on their part to confuse our perception of the fact that, wherever the New Testament is interpreted by the sympathy of an experience that is kindred to the experience of its writers, it opens up a vista through which the soul can gaze upon truths of overwhelming power, and though not grasping them in their absoluteness, perceive them clearly enough to walk securely in the light of them, and thus attain the only object for which they were revealed.

III.

REVELATION AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

P. T. Forsyth.

Revelation and the Person of Christ.[1]

I.

AMIDST the Churches, sects, and parties of Christendom, there is one cross division which does not correspond with any of the familiar lines. It is the mark of a spirit rather than of a doctrine, of a tendency more than a polity; and it may be described as the division between those whose chief aim is spiritual *safety*, and those to whom it is spiritual *certainty*. Roughly speaking, it follows most closely the distinction between the Roman genius and the Protestant; but it separates even Protestants among themselves in a way which forbids us to regard it as the dividing line of the two communions. It expresses, however, the difference between the Roman and the Protestant spirit in whatever Church it is found. And if ever that great breach is to be healed it must be by such recasting of doctrine as shall

[1] The writer of this essay desires to express his obligations, both in thought and occasionally in phrase, to the writings of Professor Herrmann, of Marburg. These obligations, however, are religious and theological, and he would not be understood to share the philosophical position which is the negative side of that school. The stress laid upon the experiential rather than the philosophical side is due to the fact that the essay is more a tract for the times than a balanced scientific discussion—which indeed space did not permit.

harmonize these two principles, and discover a certainty which itself *is* the soul's saving health, and not merely leads to it, promises it, or fulfils its preliminaries.

The doctrine which is most directly affected by this distinction is the doctrine of Revelation. The varieties in our conception of what is meant by Revelation resolve themselves into two classes. There are some who view it as providing a set of conditions, to comply with which secures by a divine but arbitrary connexion the future *safety* of the soul; and there are others who regard it as conveying something which is in itself the soul's *certainty*, its natural food, its health and salvation present and eternal—briefly, as a Soul coming to be the soul's life. The whole change and deepening now going on in our idea of Revelation may be said to be due to the progress of the latter view. It is the protestantizing of Protestantism itself under the influence of its own principle of salvation. This lies not *through* certainty, but *in* certainty, in certainty of a kind which itself *is* salvation. The way is the truth and the life. Revelation, that is to say, is not *through* Christ, but *in* Christ. Nay, the old inveterate error can only be erased by boldly saying, Revelation is Christ. Revelation is not a thing of truths at all. It is not scientific. It is a matter of will, not of thought. For it would then be but an adjunct of salvation, and its answer would not be religion, but assent, not choice, but knowledge. Truths dwell but in the forecourt of the soul. Freedom of thought is a far less precious thing than the freedom of the soul, and

at this moment far less imperative. It is for this latter that Revelation exists. It is not for illumination, but for redemption; and as only a soul can free a soul, as only a soul can mediate between soul and soul, Revelation is therefore not a thing of truths, but of persons and personal acts. It is not truth about God, but God Himself as truth; and it is not met by any belief about the soul, but by the soul believing.

When the purpose of Revelation is viewed as the soul's certainty rather than its mere safety—its inward self-security rather than its happy situation—it follows that the Revelation must be in a fact. That fact, we have just seen, must really be a person. It must be a fact of history. A real Revelation must be historic, and its power personal.

To make Nature the site of Revelation, to seek it in the Kosmos rather than in the Ethos, is the very genius of Paganism, and it is the source of the humanist and scientific Paganism of our own day. And this is true, however refined our Kosmos may be; though it be the most rarefied system of principles or diamond network of ideas. It is a procedure which leaves the character of God too much at the mercy of any particular stage in the history of discovery, or any passing phase in the history of poetry. It ends in nature-worship and idealized atheism. All truth is from God, but it does not all lead us back to God. It does not reveal Him, though it act divinely on us. Much truth passes to us through valves, as it were, which prevent the current of thought from returning by the same channel to its source, and compel us

to reach it by another circulation. If we will use words carefully, there is no Revelation in Nature. There can be none, because there is no forgiveness. We cannot be sure about her. She is only æsthetic. Her ideal is harmony, not reconciliation. She may hold to her fitful breast her tired child, soothe her fretful sons, kindle her brilliant lovers to cosmic or other emotion, and lend her imagery to magnify the passions of the heart; but for the conscience, stricken or strong, she has no word. Therefore she has no Revelation. For Revelation is not of thought, structure, or force, but of will and purpose. Nature does not contain its own teleology; and *for the moral soul* that refuses to be fancy-fed, Christ is the one luminous smile upon the dark face of the world.

Nor can we find Revelation (in the sense of religious certainty) in the movements of our own pure, pious, and genial hearts, in a natural piety, or even a Christian humanism. These are but heavenly witnesses. It is not the men who have known the heart least that have been most distrustful of its verdict on things divine. It is too unstable. What is at best but a reflection, and not a revelation, of God is oftenest a broken reflection. The polestar itself dances in that stormy sea. But, still more, the heart's voice is the voice of a sinful heart. Sin is no accident, like blindness, which leaves the faculties and the conscience clear; and it is in the hour of our most thorough and guilty confusion that we chiefly turn to seek the certainty which a Revelation exists to give. What is so often called a religion of the heart is but a mystic and sentimental

piety, with a fuss about reason and a stress upon ethics, but without the ample thought, the profound passion, and the moral verve of faith. It emphasizes what starts from us rather than what starts from God. It makes light of history, and constantly tends to view Christ as indeed the chief contributor to Christianity, but as a point that we have passed. It treats Him as the discoverer and prophet of the filial principle, but still as its mere agent and subordinate. If the Revelation of God have its immediate source in a movement of our own natural soul, then not only is Pantheism inevitable, as the most refined Nature-worship, but it is inevitable that Christ should come to be viewed as only a medium or preparation for this experience; and it will be felt that He may be safely forgotten in the hour of our rapt absorption with God, as every mere instrument, vehicle, and step of the process must be in the consummation of such an end. But that isolation of the soul with God which is so impressive to minds of the austere, mystic, and individualist type, is not Christian communion. In their solitude with God these devout souls are less lonely than they think. The mediation of Christ is equally necessary to every age and every stage of our Christian intercourse with God, who is to be found not *through* Christ, but only *in* Him. And the true idea of Revelation is that which regards Christ, not merely as the historic cause of redemption, nor even as its theological *prius*, but as its abiding spiritual ground and active principle for every man. If He be left behind in the progress of

His own religion, both He and it are less than universal. For the universality of Christianity stands on the universality of Christ; and He would be less than universal had He been more to the first stage of the Church than He is to the last—had He been then more real and near. It is just His uniqueness that He is equally necessary to the religious reality of every age, and is a portion of it in no posthumous, but in a very present sense; that He, in His living person, is an element of our moral world and not merely its legacy, its heir and not its inheritance, the test and judge of every age, "the rock on which it stands or the stone on which it falls;" that He belongs to our personal reality as Christians, and is the ground of our religious self-certainty; in whom we not only see ourselves, but find and acquire ourselves, of whom we are surer, in the classic examples of faith, than we are of ourselves or our subjective experience.

Nor can a source for Revelation be found in philosophic idealism, or the principle of divine sonship severed from the person of Christ, any more than in the æsthetic Christ. The active contents of Revelation, it must be reiterated, are not truths, ideas, or even principles. That is the fatal error shared also by the vicious notion of an orthodoxy or saving system. The sole content of Revelation, the power and gift in it, is the love, will, presence and purpose of God for our redemption. There, and there alone, must the divinity of Christ be sought. He was equipped with those powers, and only those which were essential for that work. If He was

God, it was because only in that way could the very power and life of God touch us, seize us, change us, and pass us from death to life. It was not chiefly because of a metaphysical necessity. It is incapable of any adequate metaphysical explanation. The constitution of the Godhead before the birth of Christ is no direct portion of His Revelation, however necessary as its corollary. It is possible to believe in His pre-existence as a logical necessity of redemption, while we yet deny that it forms any portion of Revelation so direct as were His historic faith and obedience unto death. The demand for Revelation which is created by the actual situation of the soul and the actual needs of the conscience is not a demand for knowledge, but for power and life; and what Revelation gives is not scientific certitude. It is not an extension of our knowledge. The more we know, the more we need Revelation. So many discussions of Revelation seem to proceed on the supposition that it is to meet our ignorance instead of our helplessness, the craving of one faculty instead of the hunger of them all, the demands of our freedom instead of the passion of our bondage, a sinless intelligence rather than a guilty conscience. They set about assuring us of a "disinterested" knowledge of God, and offering Theism as an experimental basis for religion, whereas no disinterested knowledge of God is possible. Practical Christianity does not begin with Theism. An object of disinterested knowledge can never be God for us, whatever power or reality it may have; and certainly such knowledge is not Revelation, and therefore can-

not have much value for personal religion. Revelation has less to do with divine causes, than with divine motives and purposes. It is not aetiological, for it would then be science, and not religion. It is teleological because it is moral. It regards our end and destiny, not our origin. It has nothing to say about Creation; it has everything to say about Redemption. It is silent about the origin of sin; it recognizes the fact and brings the remedy. It is obscure even about the origin of the Redeemer. Its agents are not principles, but personal powers; and what it carries home to us is not so much the thoughts of God, nor even the affections of God taken alone, but what God has *done* on our behalf. We come back to the nature of Revelation as a historic personal fact, which is the object of our soul-certainty and not simply the condition of our safety; in which it is health and not prudence to believe.

And we are sustained in this view of Revelation when we realize that it is not complete till it become intercourse. It is not an act declaratory, nor an act of mere manifestation. It is much more than a theophany. God does not simply show Himself, He *gives* Himself; and a gift is not a gift (however genuine the giving) till it is received and realized as such. Revelation is of such a nature that it can only be completed in a life of converse with the Revealer, of intercourse which takes effect not in ecstasies, but in the actual duties and occasions of our calling in life. It is not a simple act, but an act of mutuality. Its sphere is the world of experience, yet of moral and concrete experience—not ecstatic. Its response

is our faith, yet a faith sober, strong, and practically sure, not quietist, pietist, and elate. And while we refuse the Catholic view of the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation, we must yet regard the Kingdom of God as the necessary complement and response without which Revelation would not be Revelation, but only emanation or exhibition. It is a factor without which the Incarnation is not complete, the second pole without which Revelation would have nothing mutual in its nature, but would only move self-contained on its centre like a revolving light. So impossible is it to separate Revelation from Redemption, or the knowledge of what Christ is from the experience of what He did and does. It is not the philosophy of the two natures, but "the benefits of His work" that give the key to understand His Revelation.

The false ideas of Revelation are due to a false emphasis laid either on the past or on the present. What they fail to realize is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Undue stress upon the past leads to the apotheosis of a book or of a system. It may be called in a word *Confessionalism* (including Scripturalism). It means faith in some utterance of faith, at the cost of the active object of faith. The Bible is certainly on a different footing from the creeds in some ways and especially in normality; but in this respect they are alike. They are alike the product of the Church's faith in its Lord. It was not one act of Revelation that gave us the Son in Christ, and a second that gave us the Spirit in the Bible to supply what was wanting to the first. There is but

one Revelation, and it is Christ. The Lord is the Spirit. There is but one Christ, and the Bible is His prophet. The Bible is the musical echo of the Revelation—its reverberation at its first discharge into history in the deep caves and sonorous pillars of the soul.

Christ created the Church, and the Church answered first with the Bible, when faith was pure and positive, and then with the creeds, when it had lost in a refined secularity the glow of its first love. But Christianity is not a book religion. It has a book, but the book is not the Revelation. It does not even contain the Revelation any more than the reflecting telescope contains the heavens. It is the echo of the Revelation repeated, and, in a sense, even enhanced among the hills and valleys of the redeemed inspired soul. All question of a book as a revelation ought to cease when we recall that the Revelation Himself never wrote a word, never ordered a word to be written, and apparently never contemplated any Bible more extended than the Scripture He Himself had used. He thought of the New Testament as little as He thought of the creeds. And so far as His authority goes, there is just as much reason to believe in the infallibility of the one as of the other. If that infallibility be carried beyond Himself, if it be not confined to Himself, and to Himself in His direct equipment for Redemption, there is no logical halting-place till we arrive at the Vatican Decrees. And yet people wonder why Rome flourishes. Rome conquers as the savages may occasionally beat our troops—with weapons our

factories supply. Rome flourishes by working out to their conclusion principles on which a purblind Protestantism hazards its own life.

The other false idea of Revelation is mysticism or idealism, the apotheosis of a heart intuition or of a philosophic idea. They are at bottom one, and they both issue in mere contemplation. Here the undue stress is laid upon the present and not the past. Far be it from us to say that there is nothing mystic about the faith of Christ, or about His Revelation. But it is a mysticism fatal to Revelation when the affections of the individual, or the ideas of a school, supersede the historic Christ as the voice of the living God, and when the echo of Christ's influence is turned into the criterion of His Revelation. He is the test of our hearts; they are not the test of Him. He is no more to be judged by our conscience than His Gospel is to be measured by the Church's success with it among men. To make the heart the judge of Revelation is to raise sentiment and individualism to the control of Revelation, and so to make them the real Revelation. It is fatal not only to the place of Christ but to the humility of the Christian, as we have evidence in much current Christianity which is generous, rational, beautiful, and sympathetic; but is sometimes irreverent, often self-conscious, and mostly too weak in objective authority to cope with the importunity of the sensible world. A Revelation whose very being is in forgiveness, and whose action is Redemption, is denied in the act of submitting it to be judged by the soul it redeems or the conscience it creates. If a test of anything

purporting to be Revelation is to be found, it must lie in its necessary and organic connexion with the inner consciousness of the historic Christ. It is not our conscience that judges, not even "the Christ in every man," but the conscience of the historic Christ in His confessed disciples. It is yesterday's Christ that is the Christ of to-day. It is the Christ of that old yesterday that is the living Christ. It is not "the living Christ" that is the Christ of yesterday. Think what you will of the record of His birth, but do wake up to the irony of the situation when you bring Him to the bar of the conscience which owes itself to Him; and realize the fatuity of testing Him by a culture His Gospel has made possible, but whose sympathies are not with Him and whose terms He probably would not have understood. If such procedure be possible then it is we that have the Revelation, not He; and were He to revisit earth He would have to learn of His God from us, whom once He taught a message that we have outgrown. The Christian consciousness is an obedience, not a criticism. Faith is a response, it is not a source. It is not a judgment, it is an answer to the historic soul of Christ, and evoked by that alone.

II.

In the true sense of the word Revelation it must be final. If we possess a criterion of Revelation it is the criterion that becomes the Revelation. Revelation

can only be judged by Revelation. Christ's witness to Himself overbears all criticism, except that of the record. Rationalism, whether orthodox or heterodox, consists in measuring Revelation by something outside itself. But it must be borne in mind that Revelation is a religious idea, that its counterpart and response is not knowledge, nor even poetry, but faith. It is for faith, it is not for science, that Revelation is final. It is *the soul's* certainty and power that it assures. It is a religious finality that Christ claims. What He gives is peace with God. His Revelation is final, not in compass, but in kind. All is revealed but not everything. It is a qualitative and not a quantitative finality. He declares the whole counsel of God, but not every counsel. He does not give us a programme of history or a compendium of doctrine, as the Catholic and old-Protestant theory of a book-revelation is. He gives us a power of God, a certainty of faith, a quality of life, a finality of destiny, in contact with Him. Many things were unsaid, yet He said all—all that faith needs, but not all that knowledge craves; all that makes men, but not all that makes civilization—and yet all that makes civilization possible. He declares the depths of God's will, but not the details of His counsel. The Revelation of Christ is final, and was by Him meant to be final, for all that concerns God's decisive will, purpose, and act for our salvation. Christ is Himself the final expression of that. He is not final in the sense of exhausting knowledge. To be exhaustive is just not to be final. It closes one region only to set our interest free for another. He is final

because He is inexhaustible, and His silence has the same mastery, depth and suggestiveness as His speech. He is final in the sense of placing us sinful men in living, loving and trustful union with the final reality of life and the world. Our ragged rocks and roaring shoals are flooded into peace by His incoming tide. No higher revelation in kind is possible or thinkable. Later ages might extend the spiritual horizon, but nothing was left for later ages to do in the way of reconciling man and his destiny, man and God. Christ is final in respect of His undying personality and work. Whatever is to be done for human redemption He and no successor does it. Whatever comes to us in the way of revelation is the appropriation of Him. He is the ultimate impulse in the spiritual, and so in the whole progress of man. He cannot be forgotten while His work grows mighty and prevails. He cannot be parted from His work like any mere discoverer. His work is just to make Himself indispensable, to renew Himself in every age and every experience, to become in every life the one power which, amid the withering of all things, neither custom nor age can stale, but which from its throne evermore makes all things new. And he is final, furthermore, in virtue not simply of His harmony, but of His solidarity with the Father. He is thus the organ to us of a certainty which is the final certainty of life, and which would be impossible were He merely harmonious, as we all may hope to be one day, with the Father's will. The finality of His Revelation and the absoluteness of our certainty are bound up with the uniqueness in kind of His person;

which is to other persons what His Revelation, considered as truth, is to all truth else—not so much compendiary as central, pervasive and dynamic.

Christian faith has never found the ground of its certainty in itself, but always in Christ. It does not even believe in Christ because of the Bible, for that would be believing because of the effect of Christ, or the Spirit's work, upon others. Rather does faith believe in the Bible because it believes in Christ, and it descends upon historic facts with a trust in the personal fact, Christ, which is more certain to our experience than any mere historical evidence can be. Whatever account an individual here or there may give of his religious moments, in the great classical instances of Christian experience, and in the large witness of the Church itself, it is Christ, the historic Jesus, that is experienced. It is an experience that cannot be explained away as a vision might. It becomes the new life itself. Paul and Luther did not simply see the Lord. That might have been a projection of their exalted selves. But it was a creative, not a created experience. It created a new life, it was not created by the old. Their experience for ever after was a self-consciousness of Christ, as Christ's was of God. He became not an episode to them but their world.

> "This vision, far from perish, rather grows,
> Becomes their universe which sees and knows."

Moreover it was an experience without which they would have had no saving knowledge of God.

But no human being ever did for Christ what He

does for us all. There is nothing in His experience of any man analogous to our experience of Him. Revelation did not come to Him as He comes to us. He depended on none as we do on Him. There was a directness and a solidarity in the relations between Him and the Father which do not exist between the Father and us without Him. The self-consciousness of Christ in respect of God was not parallel to the God-consciousness in man. The source of religious knowledge was not the same for Him as for us. To judge from history He found His certainty in His consciousness ; we find it in Him. For Him self-consciousness was the source of such knowledge ; for us it is only its site. Revelation was not made to Christ, but to us in Christ. The matter of Revelation was not a principle which He and we alike apprehend by the same method only with different degrees of completeness. It is not a truth which would thrive in our perception, even if the memory of Him grew dim. To take Him away from present religious reality is to cut off our spiritual supplies, and close in ice our waterway to God. No man is indispensable to truth ; but Christ is. He is the divine truth of man. What He revealed was not a conviction, but Himself. His experience of God was His experience of Himself. He was God's self-expression in humanity. He was that even more than the expression of humanity in its ideal. He creates a new humanity more than He embodies the old. His first purpose was not Shakesperian—to reveal man to man. The relief that He gives the race is not the artist's relief of self-expression, but the

Saviour's relief of Redemption. He did not release the pent-up soul, but rebuilt its ruins. It was another power than man remaking man; it was not tongue-tied man made happy at last in a rapt hour of complete self-realization.

He is absolutely essential to our personal realization of the principle of His Revelation; and that not as its historic medium, but as its ever living mediator. He is not the founder of Christianity, but the living object of its faith and worship. He taught, he constrained, men to pray in such a way that their prayers turned in spite of themselves to Him. "I besought the Lord thrice." Was Paul there a saint-worshipper, an idolater? If Jesus never expressly invited worship, His Spirit led His nearest disciples to it by an irresistible necessity of faith. He hardly claimed Messiahship in so many words: but He so spoke of the kingdom, and so embodied it, that the conviction of His Messiahship became to His closest companions irresistible before He died. And so after He rose He came home to them as an object of prayer —by His own injunction indeed, but by His injunction in the shape of a necessity of faith. He is not an instance but a portion of our highest religious consciousness. He is not our ideal; for an ideal is imitable, and we cannot imitate our Redeemer. He is not our ideal, for we transcend and leave our ideal, when we have absorbed him into ourselves. The liker we grow to him, the more we can dispense with him. He does for us what it was in him to do, what at a stage we needed done; and we pass on, to remember him with gratitude but not with worship, to

find our freedom in escaping from him, and not in owning his sway. But the liker we grow to Christ the more indispensable He is to us. The closer we come to Him in character, the more He rules us. Those nearest Him have called themselves His slaves, and been their own freemen and the world's in the act. The more abundant our revelations the more of the Revelation we find Him to be ; and the more we are redeemed the more we know His sole power to redeem. The higher He lifts us the loftier we find Him ; and the more power He gives us the more we spend it in submitting to Him. Ideal is no name for what we find Him to be, and to be capable of being, to us. It seems as if our likeness to Him were only given us to enable us to realize our difference. It is in His difference from us, rather than in His resemblance, that the core and nerve of His Revelation lies. Our resemblance only provides the condition for appropriating it, and making it intelligible. The flesh is there for the sake of the Word. Why should we strive to reduce this difference ? It brings Him nearer than any resemblance can. It is just His difference from all men that He identifies Himself with every man. The dearest and the likest us cannot come to us as He can. He is our Saviour, not because He is our brother, but because he is our Lord and our God. We are not His peers. We are not even His analogue, when it is a question of our knowledge of God. His experience is not simply a glorified version of ours. Throughout the New Testament Father has a different meaning in relation to Christ, and in relation to us, with an

equal reality for both. The New Testament Father is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Father in Christ. "When *ye* pray say Our Father." Did Christ ever say *Our* Father along with His disciples, or in their name? Rather He spoke of 'my Father and your Father.' Part of the offence He gave was by claiming God as "*His own* Father, and so making Himself equal with God." There is a gulf between the Fatherhood of the New Testament and the sentimental fatherhood of literary theology and its popular Christianity. It really concedes the whole Unitarian position to say, that God is the Father of every man in the same sense in which He is the Father of Christ except that He was His Father pre-eminently. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him." He *knew* the Father whom He *revealed* to men. It was not by Revelation that He received what in Him is Revelation to us. These words are not among the disputable portions of the Gospels; and they are decisive as to Christ's unique solidarity with the Father, and the dependence of all men on Him, as He depended on none, for the knowledge of God. As Paul puts it, Christ is the Son of God with power, while we are sons by adoption, in all that pertains to the moral relationship as distinct from the natural in creation. Exception may be taken to the metaphor of adoption, but to except to the fact and the difference it seeks to cover is to except to the consistent teaching of the New Testament. There God is revealed as Father, not in our feeling of childship, but in our certainty

of sonship in Jesus Christ. He is essential to constitute the sonship, and not merely to aid us to discover it. The intrinsic quality of our religious act is our sense not of a divine principle, but of Christ revealing Himself in us. And Revelation takes effect in us, not as an act of insight, but only as an experience of being redeemed. There are pure souls, reared in the lap of Christian culture, cloistered with thought, and unfamiliar with the deepest, darkest, and most passionate experiences either of sin, the soul, or the cross, to whom this may seem both unphilosophical and untrue. But in a long-established and hereditary Christian culture there is a new danger of a lofty and noble sort, lest the world by goodness know not God.

III.

Revelation then may be defined as the free, final and effective act of God's self-communication in Jesus Christ for man's redemption. It is not simply an act of manifestation, or even of impressive representation, but it is a historic and eternal act of deliverance, prolonged in an infinite number of acts *ejusdem generis* in the experience by Christian people of their redemption in Christ. It is a free act as being wholly marvellous and unbought. It is a final act because it embodies, in an aforesaid sense, the whole purpose of God with man. And it is effective because it is only completed by its return on itself in man's experience and response. A sound returns

void, but not a word, not a revelation. A Christ is not a Christ without a kingdom. It is, moreover, the self-communication of God, because it is not a witness to God by His closest intimate even in Eternity, but God Himself at work as our Redeemer. God so loved that He gave Himself in His Son; not, God was so lovely that the Son could not help giving report of it to men. That would make Christ a religious artist more than the Saviour. Nor is it thus, God was so eager to redeem that the Son's heart filled with the design to give the helpless divine passion voice and course among men. That makes the Son the prophet of God, not to say that He came to God's rescue. But God in the Son conveyed Himself, not a report, nor an expression, nor an echo, nor an engine of His will to redeem, but His own present redeeming will. It is impossible to separate Revelation from Redemption. Revelation has no real and final meaning except as the act of Redemption to the experience of being redeemed. Its response is by faith, not by scientific certitude, by faith as the certainty and experience of reconciliation. It is a religious and not a scientific act, and only by a religious act can it be met. Its express object in us is not to produce assent, nor to facilitate discovery, nor to vindicate a rational unity in things, but to establish soul-certainty. It has nothing directly to do with the identity of thought and being. It is free to discuss that and other questions because of a certainty which cannot wait for their solution before beginning to live and rule—the soul-certainty "if God be for us who can be against us?" This is a certainty which,

as a certainty, is only to be found in Christ. "Cogito ergo sum," says Descartes, and sets modern philosophy forth on its sublime orbit. But, "alas, poor cogitator," as Carlyle says, "what then?" But the certainty which is of faith speaks on this wise: "By the grace of God I am what I am." Religion cannot wait for the certainty of speculation. It did not wait for it in the actual course of history. The certainty of faith is surer than any experience which makes a basis for the criticism of faith, and the autonomy of faith is a more self-sufficient power than the independence of science, or even the final intuition of thought. It is the foundation of our practical life and eternal committal as Christian men. The certainty of faith is a portion of our own self-certainty, because the revelation of Christ becomes a portion of our own personal reality. We acquire a self-consciousness of Christ. As He has passed beyond all dispute into the reality of the world's history, so that by our very birth to some extent we put on Christ, in like manner He passes into the reality of the individual's history. And, as He has become in one sense the conscience of civilized Europe, so, in a deeper and more thorough sense, He becomes the conscience of the redeemed soul, and its organ of intercourse with God. It is impossible for the Christian to pray to God except through Christ, and it is equally impossible on occasion not to pray to Christ or, praying to Christ, not to feel that we are worshipping God. If a disciple had never addressed to Christ on earth the words, "My Lord and my God," there can be little doubt that the sense of them

has always risen from the bosom of the Church's experience of its Lord, and could as little be holden as He was of death. That only is a revelation of God for our Christian experience, which can be worshipped as God. The curtain is the picture. A revelation which cannot be worshipped is no revelation, but only the vehicle of it; it is but a communication about God. But Christ *is* the revelation. He did not receive it. God came *through* Christ, rather than *to* Christ; therefore we praise, we bless, we worship Him.

Indeed, God is in Christ in such a way that Christ's express statement of unity with the Father is of less moment for us than the total impression produced by His whole life and person. This experience teaches us that His presence is God's presence, His action on us God's action, His forgiveness of us God's forgiveness. To convey a living person to us in such a way is more than manifestation, and more even than inspiration. What indeed is inspiration but the glow upon the Revelation as it passes through our human atmosphere? Men were not inspired *for* the Revelation but *by* it. It is the result of Revelation, not its antecedent. The Revelation inspires, it is not the inspiration which reveals. The Christ who taught Paul to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," was more than an inspirer. And in conveying to sinful men, actually and effectively, the person and will of God, Christ was much more than inspired, more even than completely and constantly filled with God. We may not think of Christ as a human receptacle, whose consecration was in the contents alone. It is quite in-

adequate to say that the mould of His human personality was willingly and entirely filled by the Spirit of God. Nor may we cherish the common error which understands by the will of God, not the living God who wills, but some counsel or expression of His intent. Christ was more than an expression or work of God's will. He was God's will in action, not its work but its working. That is the key and the distinction of His personality. His person was absolutely one with His work. It was not, as Anselm said, a means to His saving work as an end ; it was not there to give divine value to His sufferings. Nor, conversely, was His work a means to His person as an end, which is the case with breadwinners like ourselves. There was, in His own view of it, such complete identification of His person with His work as can only be expressed in the idea of Revelation, when truly understood in its connection with Redemption. But, His work was the final will and purpose of God with man. God has no end in reserve beyond Christ. He has no end to which Christ's personality could conceivably be immolated, no purpose which would justify its destruction, without bringing down the whole fabric of our moral world. His person, therefore, was the expression, the energizing of the central final will of God for our salvation, of that will in regard to man which makes God God. His whole self was identified with the sole and final act of God for us. His *whole* self one with the *sole* act of God for us ! Does that not lift Him into a place which is of Godhead far more than of manhood, and of manhood only because so uniquely of God ? I think it must be

so if the statement is understood. But the chief difficulty, in an age so impoverished in moral imagination as the present, is to get statements on such great and deep moral subjects understood before they are denied, or appreciated even when understood.

IV.

Real revelation is always Christ revealed in us, and revealed as Redeemer. In a loose and secondary sense any bright imperious perception which occurs in our higher life is so called; with the misfortune that the neophyte in his early raptures mistakes an importunate fancy for a divine call, and treats as revelation what is but a suggestion of his own raw mind under the stimulus of religious exaltation. Faith, the answer to revelation, is the sense of reconciliation with God in Christ. That is the real, direct, yea, sole object of revelation. Revelation does not tell us what to do or believe. It gives us in Christ the power, life, and certainty of reconcilement. It leaves that habitual sense to act on the character, and mould the moral judgment. It is thus that Christ reveals Himself in us and to us. He breaks forth on us from the record. His inner self comes out, seizes us, turns us from historians to Christians, from inquirers to devotees. The picture steps in awful fashion from its frame, and as we sink to the ground it lays its cheering hand on us, and we are at home in the spiritual world. The statue steps from its pedestal while we examine its lines. It steps down

glowing, and speaks a comfortable wisdom which begins with fear. No imperfections or accretions in the record prevent this result. Every line and limb is not there, there may even be some restoration in a later spirit, but the idea, the figure, the character, is distinct in our minds even as historians. And from within the historic figure there issues upon us, to make us Christians, the immortal reality itself as a living power, a present Lord, a really present God. And we know then our Redeemer has found us, as surely as we knew that we found Him beautiful and great. If this be not sure nothing is sure on the basis of which we question it. He becomes His own witness in us. What we then have is no mere insight of ours into a revelation set down in the past. It is that revelation individualizing itself into our case. It is the eternal living act of the historic Christ still acting in a particular instance, as the body's life is repeated in the life of its cells. It is the same Christ carrying out in individuals the eternal act he did once at a historic point for the race, and completing revelation in response. No phenomenon in history is revelation except in so far as it comes home to individual souls, is understood and welcomed as revelation, does in experience the work of revelation, and gives man the power amid all the pressure, illusion, and blight of life to be his own freeman in Jesus Christ.

To the individual Christ is this revelation ; from which our position seems to follow that He Himself cannot be a mere recipient of revelation, like the man He finds. A Christ who merely witnessed to God's revelation might be a valuable medium of

religious knowledge, and a powerful religious stimulus. He might be a great aid to faith and a great benefactor of the soul. But he would not exclude the possibility of mistake, nor quench the question whether he had quite correctly apprehended and transmitted the revelation he received. Then the absolute certainty of our faith would lack historic ground, and we should be driven to seek it in the disputed region of metaphysics. We might trust Christ but we could not trust in Him. We could not feel that we owed to Him our eternal selves, or could commit to Him our eternal souls. His experience would be analogous to ours, and historically the source of ours, but not, in the nature of spiritual reality, the ground of ours. He might be central to religious history, but not to religious reality. If he only realized the principle of religion, if he was only the first to grasp it in its fulness as sonship to God, if he left this principle as his great legacy to the race, if he but succeeded as none else ever did in adjusting his person to a principle, in living up to his high sweet creed, and leaving his life as an object lesson for all men to come—then indeed he might be the greatest of our soul teachers, but not the soul that makes a soul's certainty, not our revelation of God. That would then have to be sought, as he sought it, somewhere in each soul's own area, and in our dimness and vexation seldom found. His person would then have been wholly at the service of the light, but it would not itself be the luminous thing. He would be the founder, but not the object of our faith, the creator of the kingdom, as Heine said Moses *schuf*

Israel, but not its life, its permanent King and Head, not its revelation equally necessary for the reality of all time and both worlds, and equally indispensable for every man's forgiveness and reconciled intercourse with God.

V.

The form of religious certainty then was different in His case and ours, so far as we can trace Him in a record too scanty for an imitable ideal, but enough for the focus of spiritual force. For us that certainty is attached to a historic, and therefore an external, event, which transpired outside our experience, however it may be echoed and appropriated there; but for Him it had its source within His self-consciousness. We have to seek in Him what He found in Himself and found for the race. He is for us a source which had no analogue for Him. The more we realize Him the more we feel that we can only realize God in Him. And the more free and self-certain He makes us before God so much the more do we repudiate the idea of repeating His experience on our own account, of ever claiming for ourselves the same position to God that He did, or of finding in Him simply the great spiritual classic, the glorification of the God-consciousness or of the filial principle in Humanity. Doubtless He is the great spiritual classic, our ultimate religious fact, whose experience is worth far more for the nature of religion than all the rest of the race. But it is just the close interrogation

of this fact which compels us to regard Him as so much more than the great example of faith, if we use the verdict of His own self-consciousness, and take Him at His own worth. He began with a unity—a religious and not a metaphysical unity—with God, which none created in Him, but which He alone can create in us. We need not haggle about the philosophical definitions or hypostases of this unity. These are largely (even in Scripture) efforts of devout intellect, devised to explain the fact in His consciousness that He started from a unity with God which others only hope at the last to attain, and to attain only in Him. We need not go behind His own experience, which was not metaphysical, and which religiously indeed we cannot go beyond, without claiming a greater. We are face to face with the fact that so far as the Gospel record carries us into Christ's inner life, He did not *achieve* His unity with the Father by obedience and worship, but that His worship and obedience were the continuous expression of that unity. He 'learned obedience,' but He did not learn to obey. The form of the Father's will changed and deepened for Him with the tragedy of His life, but His unity with that will was as real and complete in its first demand as in its last. He came to know more of the counsel of God, but He never grew more close and obedient to His will. In all His moral and spiritual energy He was not pursuing or cultivating His unity with the Father. He was exerting it. With us there comes a growing sense of unity with God as we progress in moral obedience to His will, and especially to His incarnate will in Christ.

The sense of unity with God as a standing feature and habit of our character is a product, and mostly a very slow product of our practical faith. It is the fruit of much revelation. But with Christ Himself it was otherwise. It was not the result of revelation; for that would call for another Christ between God and Him. And it is more correct to say in this case that the practical faith and obedience was a product of His original sense of unity with God. This is a statement ventured not as the corollary of any dogmatic position assumed in advance about the person of Christ, but simply as the result of an effort to read the nature of His own consciousness from the Gospels. He does not appear to rise to a sense of His unity with the Father in proportion as He overcame the world, but He overcame the world in the progressive strength and exercise of that unity. His victory was the energizing of His relation to the Father; it was that relation in action. It was His life's work not to achieve it but to set it forth and make it actual in a real, a moral, and not a dramatic way. It was not a prize, a capture,[1] for Him, but a gift in Him for us. It was His work to reveal it in the shape of a life, not to shape His life so as to attain it. He revealed it under the concrete conditions of a life which was constantly called on for moral decisions of the gravest kind, and spiritual sagacity of the most profound. Such a life was the element, as it were, in which His intercourse with His Father took effect. It is a mistake to isolate His times of retirement and prayer, and regard them

[1] *οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο*, Phil. ii. 6.

as seasons of intercourse with God different in any true sense from the other activities of His spirit. His labour was not to win His own soul, as with us, but to approve it, to express it, and so to win others. And the soul He had to express was a soul in constant intercourse, even if not in specific prayer, with the Father. "His task was not an ideal which looked in to cheer Him and to light up His weakness." And His intercourse with God was not a mystic process that went on behind the distracting energies of an active life. Soul and life for Him were one, and His actions were part of His total intercourse and unity with the Father. His person, as we have said, was one with His work. In all He did He was giving effect to the spiritual ground behind it. And this ground, this *prius*, was His constant vital solidarity with God. He did not live toward God, He lived God forth toward men. He did not so much face God with us, He faced us with God. And amid all our admiration of His moral power or beauty, amid all our sympathy with His humane and lofty heart, amid the softening of our pity at His sweet soul's bitter fate, we are arrested, we are solemnized, and in a measure rebuked from sympathy into religious awe. We are smitten into faith and worship by the discovery that He is the pitiful and the pitiable are we, that here is no seeker after God, but even in His wrong and agony God's Bringer, His very self and real Presence; and our Martyr is our Redeemer. We kneel down in something more than loyalty as we find in Him the constant sense that He was not visited by great ideals, or sustained by a great principle, but was in every movement of His life setting

forth God in an unembarrassed, however burdened, way, and doing what in the circumstances God would do. Who could cherish that consciousness as Christ did without a vision of the circumstances which was God's in kind if not in compass, without a sense of the will of God which was much more God's sense of His own will than any other's vision or apprehension of it!

VI.

It may be said that all this makes him irrelevant to life because His obedience thus becomes a different thing from ours, and an easier; for we start from no such unity with the Father. To this it must be answered that it is just the contention of these pages that His obedience was a different thing from ours. But then it was effective for salvation, and ours is not. It was the obedience which makes ours possible; it was inimitable, but reproducible. It cannot be emulated, it can but be repeated by Himself in the members whose life and whole it is. Our great act of obedience is to give up the hope of any similar and rival obedience, of any obedience so comparable or parallel to His that we could harbour the jealous complaint that He had an advantage. He who so complains is outside Christ. Our one obedience is to welcome His obedience as the gift of God, which we must accept, enter, and share as a new and saving obedience. The obedience of faith is faith as obedience. It is faith's nature, not its result. Certainly, He had

one advantage ; He forestalled us in the claiming of none, in the self-emptying power which so few covet or grudge Him. His advantage over us, too, is our only hope of eternal advantage for ourselves. It is all ours, unless we reduce Him to our competitor.

If the saying of it would discourage our efforts in emulation of Him, perhaps it were well to say frankly that the more they are discouraged the better ; if only they are discouraged by that which puts a higher obedience at our disposal, and breaks the self-respect which is the chief inward enemy of grace, and which, in the shape of moral pride in our uprightness and respectability, is the chief obstacle to our salvation.

As for His obedience being easier than ours, the reply is really the same. The antithesis is a false one. It begins by regarding Him as one of us, and so a rival, instead of God's gift of grace to us, to save us from rivalry as our common Redeemer and our King. But the objection is not real, as may be readily tested by asking which of the murmurers would be willing to exchange lots with Him, and accept, instead of their own vocation, that of the world's Redeemer. The answer is not doubtful when we consider how many are willing to drink their own misery to the dregs rather than take the yoke of Christ—even with the aid of His fellowship and strength to bear it. Unless, indeed, this last be what they most resent. For the last enemy to be destroyed is that all but invincible pride and recalcitrancy in man, which will readily yield to an impersonal *law*, but must be broken to pieces ere

it give way to another *person* as absolute king. This is why social and political progress is so much more rapid and welcome than religious; and it is a fact which removes all parallel between the work of the politician and the preacher, the socialist and the saint. To return, if it is a question of comparative ease in the obedience, the account may be more than balanced when we remember that there was none to be for Him what He is to us, and that He had to seek in Himself alone the resources which He has enabled us to find in Him.

VII.

With this ground under our feet we need not fear falling into the hands of the Socinians or their descendants if we feel unable to get our way about in the technical theology of the two natures in one person. If the Incarnation is to cease to be the property of the schools, and become what it is not now, an essential principle of each man's conscious faith, it must cease to be a mere palladium, and become what the Godhead of Christ is in the New Testament—a gospel. It must be stated as a truth of historical and experimental religion, where the wayfarer, however simple, shall not err, so long as Christ has in him his effectual work. And the line we have taken should not be beyond such a man if he know what Christian experience is in any real and final sense. With others it is hardly possible to deal. No one can cherish a Unitarian Christ who recognizes that Jesus not only saw God truly, or truly

reflected Him, but knew that His acts were God's acts, His resolves God's resolves, and His love God's love; that His thoughts of Redemption were God thinking (and not efforts to think His thoughts after Him), His person God's real presence, and His work the immediate (though not unmediated) action of God turned on every one of us to seek and save. The things He did were not only well pleasing to God but God's deeds. Christ was God saving, and no mere agent of God's salvation. It is a difference which seems sometimes to constitute nothing less than another religion. His knowledge of some things was limited, but there was no limit to His love, to His obedience, to His sense of God's holiness, to His knowledge of the Father's will, His solidarity with it, and with the work given Him to do. With that work He was completely one; and it was this, to make good the actual redeeming presence of God in man, first in His own personal life, and next in the slow experience of history. He was one, that is, with the Kingdom of God. His continuity with the Father is expressed, not in his perception of God, nor in deeds which God approved, but in His habitual action in God's name, in His sense of a life which in its totality set forth God the Redeemer, and, especially, in His power to work in us to this day a work like forgiveness, which is the erection of the Kingdom and the work of God alone. The Unitarian or prophetic view of Christ carries us really no further than the orthodox and Anselmic view. Each is the extreme reaction from the other—on the same line and level. They each reduce Christ to an agent of forgiveness. The one

makes Him an agent before the fact, in that He met a condition which made forgiveness possible; the other makes Him an agent after the fact who made forgiveness public and credible. But He was more than either allows. He did not simply prepare forgiveness by making a satisfaction possible only to a divine nature; nor did He only declare it with all His heart and faith. By His historic personality, His actual life, death, and resurrection, He effects it in us. "He forces us to feel in His forgiving will the mind and will of God. In this act of Christ, God lays hold of us. And as the Saviour winds Himself into our life, it is God Himself that is setting up a real intercourse with us." To know the inner life of Christ is a thing possible to thousands who have no adequate idea of His biography. Indeed, it seems hidden from many who are deeply versed in the biography. But it is, in the same act and by no inference, to know the inner life of God. And though it is a bold and even extreme thing to say, yet it is a thing which the faith, and not merely the theology, of the Church has often said in prayer and hymn, it is a thing which we must always reserve the right to say, with reverent rarity and upon solemn call—in the death of Jesus it was God that died. It is wrung from us by the maturity of our experience of forgiveness, as well as by reflection on its corollaries. And it is the culmination even of a philosophy like Hegel's, who quotes, in pressing his meaning, the hymn, "Gott selbst ist todt." It is a belief from which mere religious intelligence is much more likely to revolt than Christian thought.

Socinianism is a very natural concomitant of an age like the Reformation, or our own, when a new ethical departure is correcting many of the abuses and corruptions of the religious life, and joining with science to criticize the true supernatural out of the historic record or the personal experience. But it is only general when this ethical Christianity has ousted the specific type of Christian experience (especially the central experience of forgiveness), and its decisive perception of the deep meaning of God in Christ. Much of it is due to a not unamiable deficiency in historic and especially spiritual imagination. Now, as in Paul's day, it is patent enough in many quarters that the world by righteousness knows not God, that its spiritual perception is dimmed by the keenness of its ethical sense, and it stands, as Milton's Satan once stood, "stupidly good." To such a mood the law of Christ is clear, but His person is but thinly understood. It is truly intelligible only to the deepest Christian experience, the experience which chiefly inspired the Reformation, the experience of Redemption—in the Christian and not the Buddhist sense of the word—from sin, and not from grief or wrong.

VIII.

But to this experience the uniqueness of the person of Christ is not only intelligible but above all certainties. It is the Revelation which is the light of all our seeing, and the source of all our day. And it is a Revelation which does its own work upon the soul.

It has not to wait for our conclusions on knotty prior points, or our submission to an authority which undertakes to settle them for us. One effect of the true Revelation in Christ is to destroy the abuse of ecclesiastical authority, by removing from the conditions of salvation the scholastic truths which the Church promises the layman to warrant. The saving knowledge of Christ is religious knowledge of Him; by which is meant, not the religious department of knowledge, but a kind of knowledge which is religious, i.e. which is only possible to a genuine religious experience. To this knowledge there are no unintelligible preliminaries. He is unto us Redemption, and *then* we know He is our God. If the Deity of Christ do not stand upon our personal experience of Christ and His forgiving work on man, then it has footing and value only in the schools. Perhaps the most widespread error in Christendom, which is at the root of all its abuse, perversion, and futility, lies here—that assent is demanded from the world for mere statements about Christ as a necessary preliminary of saving, or at least sanctifying, contact with Him. These truths are beyond the intelligence or the verification of most, and so the Church comes to the rescue, with a claim to know and a demand for *implicita fides* which really co-operate with the world in barring men's way to Christ. The priesthood is but the religious form of the tyrannical specialist. Certain statements must be believed, it is said, before you can get any good from Christ. But you are not in a position to believe or disbelieve, you simply do not

understand. Then let *us* understand, and *you* shall believe, says the ecclesiastic. So you shall come to Christ with a clean bill of theology, and a certificate that the necessary preliminaries have been complied with. How can you hope, says the Church, to be blessed by Christ, if you do not approach Him in faith? To approach Him in faith you must at least believe in the Incarnation. You ask what that means. It means, you are told, the mystery of the two natures in one person and the miraculous birth. It is all Greek to you. (Indeed the Greeks had much to do with the ecclesiastical statement of the matter.) But you are invited to a *fides implicita* on the subject, to confide in the religious specialism of the Church, and trust the experts of faith, who, to ease your difficulty, will tell you they only formulate what is in Scripture, and that in believing them you are only believing the Bible. The Bible indeed never demands any faith in itself as a preliminary of faith in Christ. It is for certain truths of Scripture that the claim is made. To ensure the apostolicity of these formal but saving truths, the figment of the apostolic succession of the episcopate had to be invented, by a process which culminated in Irenæus; and truth was based upon office where, at the outset, office had stood upon truth. So one lie leads on to another, as in childhood we were often told. An edifice of falsehood rises round a central delusion. A religion of mere position grows out of a religion of proposition. Orthodoxy demands a miraculous clergy for its vouchers. Their unbroken succession guarantees the purity of necessary but unintelligible

truth. So now concurring in such truth at such hands, you may go to Christ without fear of offending Him—"Lord, I believe in Thy Church and Incarnation ; have mercy on me."

The like use may be made of the doctrine of the Atonement and even the historicity of the Resurrection. The value of the latter in particular is really for faith, not for unfaith ; for the Christian, not for the mere historian. It is worth little as a weapon against the sceptic compared with its worth as a seal to the believer. Its force as a converting agent is but secondary. It is not for the world, but for the Church. It is not a condition of faith, but credible only to faith. It was believers who first believed it. This is an old sneer. We can only confound the enemy by accepting it, and extract the sting by glorying in the fact.

All this procedure is not justification by faith, but by works. It is a matter of labour and difficulty to acquire a belief in the Incarnation in this sense. Many toil a life-time, and hardly gain such a conviction on the subject as would qualify them to appear before the ecclesiastical Christ. It is all a huge mistake. That is not faith at all. Faith is the response to Revelation ; and what God revealed was neither the Incarnation nor the miraculous birth. It was Jesus Christ, the living God as the living man. We have been going the wrong way to work. We have been beginning to build our church at the spire. These great doctrines are most true, but they are the fruit of Christian faith, not its condition. To assent to them is no answer to the divine Revelation. Plenty

assent, and assent intelligently, who never felt Revelation in their lives, and never will. That can only be felt as the soul's reconciled answer to a soul. What has first to be brought to bear upon the world is Christ, not the Incarnation, nor the Atonement, nor even the Resurrection. What is often meant by the Incarnation is the Christian explanation of Christ, rather than God's Revelation in Him. That revelation is life and power, forgiveness and peace. It is Christ as a moral force, as the Almighty spiritual force, as the will and love of God in direct action on the soul for its release. What we have to approach is Christ, the man Christ Jesus. The channel of access is no theory of substance, origin, or person. It is the true, simple manhood of Jesus which we approach, not in search of knowledge or a creed, but of help, forgiveness, strength. It is His business then to convince us of His Godhead, to reveal to us behind His human person the very inward life of God. We have not to begin by explaining Him as a phenomenon, but by responding to His influence and enjoying His benefits. And, while we may criticize His intellectual knowledge, we worship His spiritual place in words no lower than 'My Lord and My God.' Such we know He is, with a certainty no criticism can shake. 'For He hath redeemed my soul from the lowest hell.' This is a redemption whose power depends on the practical effect of Christ's person on us, and it is not destroyed by any criticism of the record. It is the first condition of critical justice to the record. It is *only* the Church that can wield criticism justly. For it is criticism of

the record of One who has done thus and thus for my soul, and still more for the soul of the greatest society on earth—the Church He created, and creates. A mere scholar on the Gospels is like a pedant on a poet; a mere poet on them is like a church window against the sun, beautifying beauty's source.

It is fit here to quote the great words of Melanchthon in the introduction to the first edition of the *Loci*: "*Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia ejus cognoscere non ejus naturas, modos incarnationis, contueri.*" Nor should this, from among many similar passages from Luther, be passed by: "These sophists of schoolmen have painted a Christ. They have set forth the way He is God and man. They have numbered all His bones. They have blended the two natures in strange sort. And it is but sophisticating the knowledge of the Lord Christ after all. Christ is not called Christ because He has two natures. What is that to me? He has this glorious and comfortable name from the office and work He took. That He is by nature God and man, is a matter for Himself. But that He took a certain function, and poured His love out to be my Saviour and Redeemer, that is my comfort and my blessing."[1]

IX.

It is not only the doctrines of Scripture and of Authority that are readjusted under the true light of Revelation, but the doctrine of Redemption itself.

[1] Quoted by Harnack as motto of Book II. in his third vol.

One conclusion we come to is, that the person of Christ can only be understood by His work. This will seem a truism to some who have always held that the Atonement is the true key to the Incarnation. But these are abstractions compared with what is here meant. We mean that the person of Christ can only be understood by His work, His action, upon the world, the Church, and the believing soul—by His effect in experience ; that is to say, it can only be *religiously* understood. The authority of the Bible is the authority of Christ's person ; and that authority has no other root *for us* than in our experience of His unique and divine function in forgiveness. No views as to the constitution of the Trinity can establish Christ as an authority for the conscience, however impressive they may make Him for the imagination ; and in the Catholic Church and theology they have impressed the imagination deeply. But the moral authority of Christ does not experimentally turn upon His consubstantiality with the Father, or His relation to the universe of thought. These positions are efforts at explanation, inevitable but inadequate, on the part of those who had already owned His moral authority. It is in our experience of the actual redeeming effect upon our conscience of the man Jesus that our sense of His authority rests, our sense of His Godhead, and indeed the whole world's ultimate sense of a divine authority at all. And be it noted that it is just the sense of a divine *authority* that the world, after centuries of metaphysical theology, now chiefly needs. The sense of a divine *presence* is not so hard either

to attain or to own. It is attained by mysticism, poetry, religiosity, philosophy and even spiritualism ; and it may be owned without much sacrifice of our darling self-will. But the divine *authority*, which ere long will be the one famine in the social soul mad with the peril to its own life, *that* is to be rooted nowhere but on the evangelical foundation of a redeemed conscience. It can rest only on an authority of Christ, drawn, not merely from the fine dignity of His character, or the tradition and succession of a Church, but from that sense of Him given us in the act by which we take the germ of our new life in the shape of forgiveness from His sole hands. The authority in the history of the future is God at the only point where He is indubitable, in His self-revelation and saving action, at the point of Christ in the history of the past. Real history must have an authority which is historically real. And whatever moral science may say, practical morality must, with the democracy, increasingly find its impulse and sanction, not in the apotheosis of the paternal sentiment, but in the evangelical experience of Redemption. If the Gospel do not save society, there is no social force that can ; interests outgrow affections and there is no authority left. And by the Gospel is meant the historic actuality of Christ's person and its practical effect upon sinful men.

For a second conclusion about Redemption as Revelation is that in so viewing it we transfer the grievous obstacle in the way of forgiveness from God to man ; and we direct the work of Christ accordingly

upon man rather than upon God. What was to be overcome was less God's wrath than man's rebellion. The wrath of God is not a mode of passion, but a phase of Providence; not a temper, but a treatment on God's part as the Holy Redeemer. What was to be extorted was not punishment, but the true practical recognition of God's holiness. Without that God cannot remain God; He would be Father, but a partial not sovereign Father. But it is the very thing that sinful man cannot and will not give. It is an expiation which must be found by God, and not by man; therefore in God. Jesus Christ is the human revelation that it is so found. In Him God honoured within man the law of His own changeless holiness; He condemned sin in the flesh. He made human response to His own holiness, and a response damnatory. It is too much ignored that the revelation in Christ being a revelation of holy love, must be condemnation as earnestly as mercy. In Christ God did not simply show pity on men, but God was in man expiating sin to His own holiness. He revealed the fact that power to do even that was not sought with God in vain.

The extinction of our guilt is a pure, unbought, inexplicable act of miraculous grace. And the revelation of such extinction can only be the transfer of that act of grace into our personal experience. Its transfer, observe, not its declaration. This is a work that no mere declaration could do, no mere exhibition of pure or even devoted love. Only a person's act and experience can be a revelation to a person. Nor is it real till it be transferred within us. In this case

it is God's active experience that must be brought home to us and repeated in us. Such is the work of Christ—to realize and transfer to us the experience of God's holy love in the conditions of sin. It was not to give an equivalent for sin, but to effect in man God's own sense of what sin meant for His holiness. Christ's sorrow and death were a sacrifice offered by God to His own holiness. Christ did feel His death as a divine necessity, a necessity in God, not as an earthly necessity divinely borne. And this feeling on His part, in willing, utter obedience, was God's practical recognition of His own eternal holy nature. Christ accepted sorrow and death at the hands of God's holiness, and bore sin's damnation in humble obedience. And He did so because He knew it was the divine purpose to carry home to us by the effect on Him the holiness of God's love. It was not the sorrow that saved, not even the negative sinlessness of it, but its positive and complete obedience. It was not even the death that saved, but the living act of obedience in it. It was Christ's recognition of it as a divine necessity, which was God Himself meeting the law of His nature and satisfying in man His own holiness.

In some such way may Redemption be treated as Revelation, without becoming a mere exhibition of God's pitiful desire for man, but remaining a work and act of God demanded by His own nature and calculated in its effect to bring us to true saving repentance. As the sole organ of this repentance Christ represents us before God, no less than He represents God to us; and so He is the sole con-

dition of our repentance being saving repentance with God. Nothing here said is meant to impugn the uniqueness of Christ's work for us all. As His religion was essentially different from that of other men, so was His sacrifice. It was not simply the classic instance of the cross we have all to bear. When we have done all, something has to be done in our stead, something unique in its bearing on human sin before God.

In what sense the person of Christ is Revelation, is therefore only to be understood when we appreciate in experience the value of His work for us as sinful men. It is no final revelation for sinless intelligence. The philosophical discussion of this person is full of intense interest and all but supreme value; but for our moral need, which is *the* need of Humanity, it is comparatively sterile. Only the beneficiaries of the cross can effectually discuss the cross, and through it the Incarnation—of which the cross, and not the birth, is the key; the cross, and not the miraculous birth, because the one can be verified in our Christian experience, while the other is a question of the record alone, and cannot. It is the one and not the other that is *used* in Scripture. It is in the one, not in the other, that our certainty lies, and so our Revelation; for nothing is Revelation in the close use of words, which is not verifiable in our Christian experience.

With regard to revelation before Christ and outside Christ, that is so far from being denied here that it is only the revelation in Christ which enables *us* to call these real revelations at all, and which seals the soul of

them as the prelude of that complete and saving self-donation in God which in Christ was won and assured for ever. The certainty which only *visited* the heralds of the Kingdom *abides* with us by the indwelling of Him who is the Kingdom. It is only in Christ that their certainty, their revelationary element, is verified and transferred to us.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it may be added in closing, is one that needs re-examination from our point of view. But upon that we cannot enter here. We can but confess His Power, beseech His presence, and beg Him to amend the flaws that lurk in every such effort as this to search His depths and account for His mighty doings in our souls.

IV.

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

ERIC A. LAWRENCE.

Christ and the Christian.

IT is the purpose of the following essay to illustrate the beginning and the course of conscious life in Christ. The writer is deeply sensible of the difficulties of the task, and shrinks from attempting its discharge, for he is well aware that an adequate treatment of the subject would demand a fulness and ripeness of Christian experience to which he can lay no claim. But he believes that every one who really desires to know Christ, and who is therefore prepared to yield to Christ the obedience by which alone this knowledge can be gained, should be able to say something that may prove welcome and helpful to all who cherish this longing in their hearts; and something that perchance may serve to implant such longing in hearts that as yet are strangers to it.

The Church and the world seem to need, above all things, the help of those who, being able to say with utter confidence, "I know Him whom I have believed," are willing also to state, with utmost directness and simplicity, how this knowledge has been reached. It is well to know what good men have thought of God and Christ, and of the great salvation of which the Gospel speaks; to know how they have

built and buttressed their systems of theology, and with what keen and skilful logic they defend the doctrines they embrace; but it is better still to learn how a soul has come into conscious relation to its Lord, and to obtain the humblest testimony of experience to His grace and power. Men and women who have courage to repeat the invitation of the Psalmist: "Come hither and hearken all ye that fear the Lord, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul," will seldom fail to find a grateful audience. A little direct testimony may arrest the attention of those who turn away in weariness from abundant speculation. And it is testimony that the disciples of our Lord are charged to bear; it is as witnesses that he sends them forth into the world; and though many may be ashamed of the witness that they have to bear, because it is so poor and partial;—and especially because its poverty is felt to be a rebuke and condemnation, since it might have been so much richer and deeper, had they only been more steadfast and obedient;—it must not on that account be withheld. The mariner upon a storm-tossed sea, who has lost his bearings, and drifted past the lighthouse, may be warned of danger and guided into safety by the feeble light in the window of the cottage on the cliff: and the spiritual darkness of the world is lessened by the very humblest light that is allowed to shine.

The Christian believer who claims to speak that which he knows, and to testify of that which he has seen, may be justly challenged to state the grounds of his confidence, and the challenge is one that he

should be prepared to meet.[1] He may hold, and he ought to hold, as steadfastly as the agnostic, "that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition, unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty."[2] With the agnostic, he must "deny and repudiate as immoral, the contrary doctrine, that there are propositions which men ought to believe, without logically satisfactory evidence; and that reprobation ought to attach to the profession of disbelief in such inadequately supported propositions."[3] For himself, at any rate, the logical justification of his faith must be ample and complete. It may be hard for him to present to others, in the form of a convincing argument, the evidence that is to him most cogent. But for himself his faith is capable of proof, and proved. For "proof," after all, is nothing more than a sufficient reason for believing: its effective force depends as much upon the moral and intellectual condition of those to whom it is presented, as upon its own intrinsic validity and weight. Faith must have grounds, and in the statement of its grounds a man produces the evidence that constitutes for him its logical justification.

Of course it is open to those to whom he speaks to reject the evidence he has to offer, as untrustworthy, or as insufficient. "Your experience," they may say, "is no doubt very interesting and instructive; we do

[1] 1 St. Peter iii. 15.
[2] Huxley, "Christianity and Agnosticism," *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 25, p. 938.
[3] Ib.

not question for a moment that you have known those seasons of darkness and despair, and of great light and joy, of which you speak; we do not doubt that you have been tormented by what you call a sense of guilt, and wonderfully cheered and blessed by what you call a sense of pardon. But we question your interpretation of this experience. When you speak of redemption and eternal life in Christ, we regard that as nothing more than your own way of explaining what may be otherwise explained."

To this the Christian believer can only reply, that the faith in Christ of which his experience is the direct outcome, supplies the only explanation of that experience which he is able to accept. Experience verifies and strengthens the faith from which it proceeds. He knows that his sense of peace with God has been ever according to his faith in Christ; and it is to him a vain thing to seek to interpret apart from Christ that which has been known only through Him. Moreover, he will add that Christ supplies an interpretation of his whole experience—and not only of that which is coeval and coequal with his faith—which yields the deepest satisfaction to both heart and mind. The dumb yearnings, the vague aspirations, the inward restlessness and discontent that he has known, are all explained in the light of the revelation he beholds in Christ. And he is thus led to believe that there is a relation between Christ and man that does not begin with the consciousness of it; that exists before it is discerned, and continues though it be denied.

Our Lord always assumed, and apostles frequently

declare, that He sustains a unique relation to the whole human race. He is the Light which lighteth every man. He is Lord over all—and not only over those who acknowledge His authority, and bow in homage at His feet. He is the Vine, and men are the branches, whether they know it or not. Faith does not graft a man into the true Vine; but by faith he *abides* in the Vine. Faith apprehends, but does not create this relation between Christ and man.

But the apprehension of faith is fruitful: by means of it a new relation comes to be. Upon the basis of the relation that is grounded in the constitution of our nature, there arises a relation that proceeds from the free submission of our will; and we attain to a conscious life in Christ—to a life, i.e. which is consciously derived from Him, and consciously dependent on Him. It is this conscious life in Christ—this ethical relation, which begins with faith and is perfected through the obedience of faith—whose beginning and course the following pages would attempt to trace.

Beginnings are apt to hide themselves from view, and their discovery is not by any means an easy task. Every life has, so to speak, its unknown background, lying beyond the point to which the earliest recollections reach. The memory travels back along a path on which the light falls with ever fainter glow, until at length the last gleams of it fade away and all is thick darkness. But that darkness is not empty; to an eye that was able to penetrate its depths it would have many things to

show. Manifold influences were at work upon the soul, in that most impressionable period of its being, and they have left their marks behind: then often the mould of character is fixed. So it comes to pass that under the gracious influences of a Christian home—through the wise and watchful care of parents, who themselves were in possession of a conscious life in Christ—many a young soul has unwittingly moved towards its Lord, and on the attainment of self-knowledge has found itself already in His kingdom. For such an one it ever must be difficult, and may well be impossible, to fix the beginning even of *conscious* life in Christ—to say, that is, when first the consciousness of relationship to Him, and dependence upon Him, began. Many have been known to say that they could not remember when they first began to put their trust in Christ, to love Him, and to bow to His authority: and this, so far from being regarded as a surprising thing, so far from being supposed to indicate something shallow and defective in experience and self-knowledge, is surely rather what should be expected in the case of those who have been taught to look to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour from their earliest years.

Men differ so widely in respect of the temperament that they inherit and the training they receive, and the diversities of Christian experience are consequently so great, that no single representation of the beginning of conscious life in Christ is likely to seem adequate and satisfactory to all. It may even appear to be quite culpably deficient, because it takes

no account of what some have been wont to regard as most distinctive and essential. For it cannot be denied that some have found peace and light in teaching that has seemed to others to aggravate perplexities, and make the darkness deeper. Christ and His salvation have been conceived and presented in many different forms, and conditions which some have assumed, and declared, to be essential to any real experience of His saving power, have appeared to others to be not only quite unauthorized and needless, but even positively obstructive. It is a matter of common observation that the same appeal does not win its way to every heart, that here one aspect of the common truth, and there another, is felt and shown to be most powerful and convincing. And as there is great diversity in the effective force of the outward incentives brought to bear on men by those who seek to lead them to their Lord, so also is there great diversity in those inward motives by which men are impelled to betake themselves to Him. One man opens the "Pilgrim's Progress," and finds himself on every page. He has trodden all the way that Bunyan's pilgrim trod from the City of Destruction to the Delectable Mountains; he knows every step of the road. But another man looks into the same book, and it is only here and there that he can recognize a true description of himself, and of the inmost experiences of his soul. Yet both of these men may be living the life of faith in the Son of God. Some have been led—one might say driven—to Christ, by a certain fearful looking-for of judgment that has haunted and harassed their

hearts; they have fled to Him for refuge from peril they felt to be impending, and their chief thought has been of some way of escape. Others have been drawn to Him by keen dissatisfaction with themselves, and deep yearnings after higher good that filled their hearts and minds; and their chief thought has been of that to which by the help of Christ they might be enabled to attain. Such men have started from different points, and travelled by different paths to the goal of peace and blessedness that both alike have reached. Or it may easily be that though their starting-points are different, their paths converge and meet before they reach the goal; and in experiences seemingly so diverse, one and the same man may share. That there have been, and still are, these wide diversities in Christian experience is an unquestionable fact, and it must not be ignored. It is a mistake—and a mistake by which many have been hindered and perplexed—to suppose that there is any one type of Christian experience to which all should be expected to conform. And any one who knows what it is to have looked with deep and anxious longing for an experience that never came, and to have been harassed by the thought that its absence was the evidence of fatal error, or of some inbred incapacity, which rendered quite impossible a true apprehension of Christ, and a real experience of His saving power, will be very wary lest he should use language that even seems to suggest that the beginning and the course of conscious life in Christ must be always and everywhere the same.

But while this is fully recognized, and emphasized, as a matter that must not by any means be overlooked, it will also be readily allowed that experiences which can be rightly described by a common name must have something in common. If all are entitled to be distinguished as "Christian," it is not unreasonable to assume that each must in some respects resemble all the rest, and that, amid all the diversities that they present, at least the outlines of a common likeness may be traced. It may be asked, with good hope that the question is one to which an answer may be found—What are the distinctive and essential characteristics of the Christian experience, appearing at its outset, and present throughout all its course?

Before proceeding to return the answers to this question which appear to the present writer to be most sound and true, it may be well to give a little space to the consideration of a presumably prevalent idea, that the initial stage in Christian experience is what is called a *conviction of sin.* Is this actually the case? Do those who have to speak with men and women about their relation to the Lord Jesus, commonly find that a sense of sin is an early and elementary experience? This question cannot be answered until another, which it immediately suggests, has been considered, viz.—What is meant by a sense of sin? It would seem that certain experiences which differ essentially from it are not unfrequently mistaken for it; and we must therefore eliminate before we can define.

1. A sense of sin differs from a sense of infirmities

and faults. A man may be very sensible of moral weakness, and liability to err ; may know that certain forms of temptation assault him with a power that he finds himself unable to resist, and that he has many grave defects of temper and disposition. He may bitterly lament at times these clinging infirmities and faults ; especially when they have led him into positions of difficulty and distress, and caused him to say and do things, that he would fain *un*do and *un*say if he could. He may frankly acknowledge his faults, and make no endeavour to conceal them, and may express on their account some genuine sorrow. But this sense of mortal weakness, and manifold defects, is something very different from a sense of *sin*. It may occasion frequent regret, and much self-pity, but may be unaccompanied by any self-reproach. Many men think that what they call their natural infirmities and faults entitle them to much consideration and very lenient judgment ; they do *not* think that they justly expose them to the divine displeasure. Nay, as they dwell upon their weaknesses, making many excuses for themselves, and indulging largely in self-pity, they even come to think that they have more reason to raise complaint against God, than God has to complain of them. The fact is, this sense of infirmities and faults may be present in the heart in which there is no sense of God, and in which, therefore there can be no sense of *sin*.

2. The sense of sin differs, again, from a sense of need, and a feeling of dissatisfaction with one's self. Of course wherever there is a sense of sin there will also be a feeling of dissatisfaction, and a sense of

need; but the converse is not true, for men may be very conscious of need, and greatly dissatisfied with themselves, when they have not any sense of sin at all. The rich young ruler who went to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life, evidently had a sense of need; he was dissatisfied with himself. But he had no sense of sin, no sense that he was a just object of divine displeasure. He does not appear to have been harassed by any reproaches of conscience; he declared that he had been faithful, from his youth up, to every demand laid upon him by the law. His was a case, then, of a genuine sense of need, and self-dissatisfaction, unattended by any sense of sin. And such a case is not rare. There are many who would fain be better than they are; who would fain possess a peace and joy and happy confidence that have yet no place within their hearts. They feel their need, and are often sensible of inward restlessness and pain; but, like the man who laments his infirmities and faults, while regarding them as calling rather for pity than for blame, they may be apt to think of themselves as objects of compassion; and with all their feeling of dissatisfaction and of need, there may be no sense of *sin*.

3. The sense of sin differs, again, from a sense of peril, and a dread of punishment. The two things have often been confounded, but they are essentially distinct. The fear of punishment may indeed most naturally proceed from and accompany the sense of sin, but it may exist where there is no sense of sin at all. A certain fearful looking-for of judgment, a dreadful sense of some impending peril, has been

stirred up within the soul by statements of the awful doom awaiting the impenitent; by vivid pictures of intolerable anguish that must at some time be endured by those who have neglected every offer of salvation, and refused to make their peace with God. And the soul agitated to its depths by such denunciations and appeals, has been said to be under conviction of *sin*. But was it really so? Has not the uppermost desire in such soul often been to obtain assurance of safety, and not to be cleansed from all iniquity? And has there not often been a secret doubt as to the justice of the punishment foretold? a thought that the sentence was quite incommensurate with the offence? The appeal to fear, once so common, and now perhaps too rare, in Christian pulpits, did not always evoke a sense of sin in those hearts that it touched and moved. It often stirred the emotions, when it did not reach the conscience. It awakened a sense of peril, a dread of punishment, that may indeed have great and wholesome issues, but that need to be distinguished from a sense of sin. The sense of infirmities and faults; the sense of dissatisfaction and of need; the sense of peril, and the dread of punishment, may all accompany the sense of sin, and be included in it; but it differs essentially from them, and they may be, one or all, where it is not.

The sense of sin presupposes a sense of obligation. In its earliest, simplest form, it is the consciousness of a disinclination to pursue that which we are under a recognized obligation to obtain. The feeling that we *ought* to do what we have left

undone; that we *ought* to have left undone what we did; that we *ought* to love what we have hated, and to hate what we have loved—this is a sense of sin. The obligation must be recognized, or the sense of sin cannot arise. This is what St. Paul declared, when he said "through law cometh the knowledge of sin."[1] There is a 'law'—it may be called 'the law of our being,' 'the law of righteousness,' or by whatsoever other name may be preferred—to which a man feels himself under obligation to conform. His perception of it, his sense of obligation in relation to it, may be strong or feeble, keen or dull, according to the education his conscience has received; but only as this sense of obligation is awakened, can the sense of *sin* arise. Then comes the conflict between acknowledged duty and perverse desire. The will is weak to execute that which it is most ready to approve. The man discerns a law in his members warring against the law of his mind.

> "He knows a baseness in his blood
> At such strange war with something good,
> He may not do the thing he would.

And all his failures, and infirmities, and evil inclinations are seen and acknowledged as the outcome and evidence of *sin*.

Now when this experience is taken to the light that is in Christ, it receives its full interpretation, and the sense of sin then becomes the sense of alienation from God. It is this inward estrangement of the heart from Him that makes it hard to

[1] Rom. iii. 20.

see, harder to do, and hardest of all to love, His righteous and holy will. Devout men, before Christ came in the flesh, may have known that this was indeed the root of all their inward misery and shame, and the source of the unrighteousness that they deplored. But it was the eternal life which was their light; that life which, in the fulness of the time, was manifested in Christ Jesus. Through Him alone is sin known in its true nature; and the knowledge of it brings the consciousness of reconciliation as man's deepest need. It leads men to look with deep desire to Him who seeks to quicken the filial spirit in all hearts, and to bring each wayward and rebellious will into submission to its Father. Christ alone can make known to us the real nature of sin; He reveals the need which He only can supply.

It would seem, then, that the distinctively Christian sense of sin as alienation of the heart from God, is not an initial or elementary experience. It presupposes some knowledge of Christ. It may come very gradually. And though it always does and must emerge in the course of conscious life in Christ, and become increasingly vivid and intense, it does not always—and it may be doubted whether it does usually or often—appe r at the very beginning of that life.

It is in that knowledge of Christ which precedes and renders possible the Christian sense of sin, that the beginnings of a conscious life in Christ are to be sought and found. What, then, is the nature of this initial knowledge of Christ? what are its contents? what aspects of the truth does it embrace? It must

obviously go beyond a mere knowledge of the historical facts recorded in the Gospels; for all these may be fully known by one who has neither taken, nor so much as thought of taking, a single step towards that obedience and faith which Christ requires. As evidently must it go beyond the knowledge of all that apostles and Christian teachers have declared concerning the significance and claims of Jesus Christ; for this may be possessed by many who have not yet considered the apostolic testimony, or even deemed it worthy of consideration. Knowledge such as this, however exact and full, amounts to no more than what St. Paul calls knowing Christ 'after the flesh.'

The knowledge that marks the beginning of conscious life in Christ is far in advance of this. It is the recognition of personal relationship to Christ, with some perception of the obligations this relationship involves. And in the first instance it is the recognition of the Authority of Christ.

It is true that the love and gentleness of Jesus are the first things of which we hear. We are taught to address Him in our earliest years as the 'Tender Shepherd,' as 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.' And away back in those days of childhood, away back beyond the earliest days to which our memory can reach, we may have received impressions of our Lord that have never faded quite away, and that may be classed among the very earliest experiences to which the name Christian may be justly given. But even then, why was it that the Shepherd's tenderness appeared so wonderful and gracious?

Why was it that the love which led Him to give Himself up for us, filled our hearts with awe and adoration? Why was it that the meekness and gentleness of Jesus were represented to us, and regarded by us, as marks of condescension, and as grounds of trust? Was it not because this Jesus was one whom we were taught to address upon our knees?—one whom we were told we must honour and obey; and one whose authority and right to rule over us were acknowledged in the very manner of our approach to Him?

It is true, again, that many may be first drawn to Christ by His promise of rest to all labouring and heavy-laden souls, by a sense of being all wrong, and an ardent longing to be made whole, or by the deep-felt need and desire of forgiveness. But in all such cases, presupposed by and explaining every act and every hope, there is some perception of the authority of Christ. His promise of forgiveness cannot bring any peace and comfort to the soul that is not already persuaded of His power on earth to forgive sins. Experience, indeed, will deepen the persuasion, and add immeasurably to our confidence in Him; but the persuasion must exist already in some degree as a condition of the experience. Some sense, however dim and feeble, of the authority of Christ marks the beginning of the Christian life, and apart from it that life cannot begin at all.

The recorded experience of St. Paul illustrates and confirms what has been said. It was indeed the love of Christ—Paul's apprehension of Christ's great love for him—that constrained him to his life of splendid

heroism and devotion. Ever again was he moved to rapture and to fuller consecration by the thought, "He loved me and gave Himself up for me."[1] Never did man feel more deeply than St. Paul, the wonder and the glory of that love. Never has the cross, and the awful sacrifice it represents, stirred any soul more deeply than it stirred the soul of the apostle. But it was not at the first stage of his Christian experience that Paul learnt the meaning of the Cross of Christ, or felt the might and majesty of His great love. Paul's wonder at the love of Christ, and his sense of the infinite meaning of Christ's death, depended on his sense of who Christ was. More and more, as his Christian life advanced, did he feel the power of that love and of that death; but it was not with the perception of it that his life in Christ began. He knew something of Jesus, something of the manner of the life He lived, something of the teaching that He gave, at the time when he was actively engaged in persecuting all His followers, and invoking the aid of the Jewish authorities in executing his designs against them. He had heard the story of the crucifixion at the time when he stood by consenting to the death of Stephen and keeping the garments of them that slew him. Yet then he saw nothing in the Cross to move his wonder and constrain his homage. It was when he became assured that Jesus Christ was still alive, when he became convinced that the story of His resurrection from the dead was no mere tale, that his whole attitude towards Jesus underwent a complete change. The first utterance of his new

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

experience was the startled question: "Who art Thou, *Lord?*" He had seen a light in which the despised and persecuted Galilean, whom he had regarded with hostility and scorn, appeared as the rightful Master of his soul. He had heard a voice that seemed to him to speak in tones of strange authority, and to issue commands that he must instantly obey. "What shall I do, Lord?" is the second question, that in the tumult of his feelings and the shock of his surprise forces its way to his lips. Read any one of those three accounts of St. Paul's conversion that have been preserved and handed down in the Acts of the Apostles, and it will appear from them that the first stage in his Christian experience—the first step towards that life of faith in the Son of God which he was henceforth to live—was his recognition of the authority of Christ.

The successive stages in the apprehension of Christ seem to be clearly marked in the full title, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Jesus* is a proper name; it carries us back before all Churches, behind all doctrines, ere ever the Christian faith itself began to be, and brings us face to face with a historic personage, by whom this Christian faith was founded, and with whom all Christian doctrine is concerned. Jesus is the ultimate fact of the Christian faith, the root from which it grows, the rock on which it rests. Whatever men may think about Jesus, He is *there*, and they cannot get rid of Him. He lived, and toiled, and taught, and died among men. He is no fancy, no myth, no invention, but a Fact; not to be explained away, nor yet to be explained as the

creation of His age, as the outcome of conditions into which He was born, and amid which He was reared. He is *there,* "a root out of a dry ground," a root from which all that is noblest and loveliest and best in human aspiration and attainment has sprung and is springing still.[1]

Christ, as all know is not a proper name, though now it is used as such, but a title denoting official rank, and a divine commission. The addition of the title Christ to the name Jesus marks a definite act of faith. The earliest creed of the Church was embodied in the two words *Jesus Christ.* It was a confession that Jesus of Nazareth was God's appointed and anointed messenger; the Christ of God, whose coming the prophets had foretold, and for whose appearance the people longed and waited. This was the substance of the message that apostles carried to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel," and their first aim was to quicken this conviction in all hearts. Men had passed beyond a mere knowledge of the Man Jesus, as one who had actually lived and laboured on the earth, and had begun to take up an attitude of faith in Him, as One standing in a unique relation to themselves and God, when they acknowledged Him to be the Christ.

But since Jesus is the Christ He must be more than the Christ, for the God whom He reveals is not the God of the Jews alone, but the God and Father of all mankind. His claim is not national, but universal. He stands in a unique relation to the whole race, and

[1] Cp. the often quoted words of Mr. John Stuart Mill in *Three Essays on Religion,* pp. 253-4.

satisfies the deepest longings of each soul. The perception of this fact brings us to the highest stage in faith's apprehension. We have passed from the knowledge of the Man Jesus to the recognition of the divine messenger, the Christ, and now to the confession Jesus Christ, faith adds the acknowledgment *our Lord.*

No doubt this confession may often be upon the lips of those who have no real apprehension of its truth. The mere utterance of it can be no evidence that the relationships and obligations it implies are recognized. We may have called Jesus Lord, may have sung His praises and met for worship in His name, and called on men and angels to bow in adoration at His feet, and "crown Him Lord of all," while yet we have no true sense of His authority over us, and no serious intention to submit ourselves to His control. But not until the authority thus formally and thoughtlessly acknowledged is realized and deeply felt, not until the traditional confession and belief have become the matter of personal conviction, does the Christian life, the conscious life in Christ, actually begin.[1]

Now what is involved in this recognition of the authority of Christ? When that authority is made the subject of our earnest thought, three questions regarding it arise: (1) What does it embrace—to what realm of things does it relate? (2) What does it imply? (3) What does it demand?

[1] "All redemption must begin in subjection, and in the recovery of the sense of Fatherhood and Authority, as all ruin and desolation begin in the loss of that sense."—Ruskin, *Time and Tide*, p. 192.

Christ does not speak to us with authority on every subject that may engage our interest and occupy our thought. He does not satisfy our curiosity on all matters touching past or future concerning which we may wish to be informed. We cannot appeal to Him in settlement of any question of a merely scientific or literary kind. He does not forestall any knowledge that men are competent to acquire for themselves by observation, experience and critical investigation. He does not help us to solve problems concerning the origin and development of the material universe. He does not give us any information respecting the authorship, dates, and historical value of the Old Testament Scriptures. Nor does He give us much positive information as to the nature and conditions of the life beyond the grave, and the employments and enjoyments of the world to come. Those who have been most willing and receptive learners at His feet have yet to confess that they know in part, and prophesy in part, and see as in a mirror, darkly, and that it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

There are two great themes which are the subject of all the teaching of our Lord—and they are God and Man. He speaks of God's relationship to man and of man's relationship to God. He reveals the divine purposes and dispositions, and human destinies and duties. He declares what men are to one another and to God. He speaks of sin, and quickens in the heart of man a sense of the sin of which He speaks. He assures men of divine forgiveness, and through Him they gain experience of its reality and

power. These are the themes on which Christ speaks, and claims to speak, with a unique authority. He stands before us as the eternal answer to the twofold prayer, "Show me myself; show me Thy glory." His authority of tone and manner in dealing with these themes astonished those who heard Him first, and still continues to astonish all those who listen to His words. He does not turn a wistful gaze towards the things unseen, as one who longs to penetrate a hidden mystery, and who fain would pass beyond the narrow limits of his knowledge upon the wings of adventurous speculation; but with wonderful calmness and confidence He declares to men the very mind of God. He does not speak to men as one who is himself perplexed by the problems that exercise their thought, who himself is involved in the darkness from which they need to be delivered; but with clear and unhesitating tones He declares the relationships that they sustain and the duties that they owe, and with regal authority commands obedience to the precepts and directions that He gives. If men yield to Him the obedience that He claims He assures them that all will be well, they will find rest unto their souls, they will walk no longer in the darkness but will have the light of life. If they refuse to obey Him they will incur the condemnation and the ruin of those who love the darkness rather than the light.

It appears, then, that the authority of Christ covers the whole domain of moral and spiritual relationships and duties. Do we ask what is the attitude of God towards man, and what His will concerning us? It

is on the authority of Jesus Christ that the satisfying answer to such questions ultimately rests. Do we ask what is the duty that man owes to man, and what the obligation resting on each one? Christ supplies the standard by which the answer is determined, and decides the question with authority from which, for the Christian, there is no appeal.

What, then, does this amazing authority imply? The question is one that must force itself on the attention of every serious inquirer. It would be well if all could be persuaded to ponder it in their hearts; and whenever the grasp of faith grows feeble, and its vision dim, there is no better way in which to secure a restoration of its vigour than to give to this question the earnest consideration it demands. The more deeply it is pondered the more clearly is it seen that the authority of Christ implies a unique relation on His part to the subjects it concerns;—a relation justifying all the claims He makes and all the hopes He quickens. The relation explains the authority; the authority is derived from the relation. The moral lordship of Christ may be acknowledged by many who make no attempt to account for it, who neglect or even refuse to consider the basis upon which it rests; but when once we inquire into its grounds, when once we ask how it is that He has come to this position of supreme ethical dominion, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that He sustains a unique relation to both God and Man, that He is indeed, in a sense in which the words cannot be used of any other, Son of Man and Son of God.[1]

[1] Cp. Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, 1891, pp. 24, 25. And for

This perception of what the authority of Christ implies, when regarded as a conclusion of the reason, cannot of course be classed among the elementary experiences of the Christian life. But that which becomes at length a reasoned conviction, exists in germ already in the earliest faith; and it would seem that the recognition of the authority of Christ is accompanied from the very first by a sense of His divine right to rule over us. It is not with the discernment of the heavenly wisdom contained in a venerable book, nor with a mere knowledge of precepts whose lofty righteousness we are constrained to acknowledge and admire, and whose binding force we feel, that the Christian life begins; but with the recognition of a Person, full of grace and truth, who reveals the relationships that are the final ground of all the duties He calls us to fulfil, and the source of highest blessedness and peace.

This recognition of the authority of Christ seems to be justly placed here, at the very beginning of the Christian life, both because the Christian life cannot begin without it, and because if it be genuine and sincere that life must follow upon it. It is believed by the present writer that an analysis of Christian experiences, however diversified their course may be, would show that this is in point of fact the common starting-point. It is not meant, of course, that a full sense of the authority of Christ comes at once into the heart and mind of any one. There must be

an excellent distinction between despotic and paternal authority, in illustration of the authority of Christ, see the same volume, p. 177 ff.

growth in the perception of it. But it is meant that His authority is the very thing that arrests attention and attracts our faith, and that we do not begin to obey Christ till we have felt His right to command.

But something must follow the recognition of the authority of Christ. It is the starting-point, and from it we must proceed. We have to consider what it demands. The answer to this question may be given in a single word:—the recognition of the authority of Christ demands *submission* to Him, and submission includes trust and obedience.

It was said above that the Christian life must follow any genuine and sincere discernment of the authority of Christ. But exception may be taken to that statement. It may be said that the recognition of duty does not necessarily lead to its fulfilment. We often leave undone what we acknowledge that we ought to do, and we may refuse to submit ourselves to an authority that we constantly recognize in words. On this ground it may be contended that the Christian life does not necessarily begin with the recognition of the authority of Christ, though it cannot begin where that is wanting, but rather with submission to His authority. Against this, and in defence of the statement in question, it might be urged that no recognition of Christ's authority that did not issue in submission to Him, was entitled to be described as genuine and sincere. But the point is not one on which it is worth while to linger. It will be admitted that the conscious life in Christ has not begun until the trust and obedience that express submission to Him have followed the discern-

ment and confession of His authority and right to rule.

Here, then, the question as to the beginning of the conscious life in Christ may be left, and the attempt may now be made to indicate its character and course.

Submission is still the word that must be used to express the condition of progress, the secret of confidence and peace. It is by submission to Christ, by unfaltering trust in Him, by utter loyalty to Him in thought and act, that the Christian life proceeds from strength to strength, from glory unto glory. This is the constant demand, impressed upon us with ever increasing force by the manifold failures, the frequent loss and sorrow, into which we are led by our self-will, illustrated for us in the lives of victorious faith and patient toil and noble achievement which the saints have lived, and brought ever again most vividly before us as our sense of the authority of Christ becomes more commanding and complete. All those who have engaged in earnest endeavours after the Christian life will readily acknowledge that their experiences have been bright and blessed, or full of woe and darkness, according to the measure of their trust in Christ and their obedience to Him.

It is not difficult to state the conditions of joy and triumph in the Christian life, for they are few and simple. Perhaps no one, whatever be his attitude towards the Christian faith, would for a moment deny or doubt that firm confidence in Jesus Christ, and steadfast loyalty to Him, would necessarily issue in a life of inward peace, and graciousness of out-

ward deed. There are multitudes around us, outside the churches as well as within them, who are satisfied that the whole face, and the whole heart, of the world, would undergo a glorious and blessed transformation, if men everywhere should yield themselves to the control of Christ. But when from anticipations and reasonings as to what might be, we turn to contemplate what *is*—when from considerations of the course that the Christian life would run if the conditions of its welfare were constantly maintained, we turn to consider the course it does actually take —what is it that we see?

Here, it may be thought, even more than in the endeavour to discover the beginning of the divine life in the soul, we are met by varieties so numerous and so great as to render the attempt to trace the course of Christian experience quite hopeless. Some happy souls seem ever to be singing on the heights, and to make their journey beneath cloudless skies; while others would seem to know few seasons of exulting joy, and for the most part to go upon their way with heavy hearts, and an ever present and painful sense of the darkness by which they are encompassed. But appearances are apt to deceive, and we are often reminded that 'things are not what they seem.' The heart that is apparently so confident and glad 'knoweth its own bitterness,' and could tell of unsuspected conflicts, and seasons of despondency and doubt; and the Christian who seems to be habitually depressed may be conscious of a secret joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. To the present writer it seems a far easier thing to trace

the course of Christian experience than to discover its beginning, and he believes that the outline of that course which is now attempted will be recognized by most as true.

Here is one who has felt and acknowledged the claim of Jesus Christ to his trust, obedience and love. He has felt that he ought to submit himself to Christ as his Saviour and his Lord, and has resolved that the submission shall be made. He starts upon his way with full assurance that the path he has determined to pursue is the path of duty and of peace. He has not yet thought much of the possible difficulties of the way, perhaps he has supposed that it would always be easy and delightful. But before long he discovers that old things have not yet passed away, that dispositions, tempers, judgments, estimates of value, which are plainly contrary to the mind of Christ, still hold possession of his mind and heart. He thought he had submitted himself to Christ, but he finds that his submission is partial and vacillating; he is not yet prepared to yield himself to Christ quite unreservedly. There is some limited domain in which he will suffer Christ to rule over him, but beyond its borders he has still some other master. This is the beginning of conflict for every one who will not turn back and abandon the path he has begun to tread, but is earnestly minded to press on. It is the beginning of that self-knowledge which comes to everyone who draws near to the light that is in Christ. It is the beginning of the Christian sense of sin, as alienation of the mind and will from God.

For why is it that we find it hard to follow Christ and to submit ourselves without reserve to His direction and control? It is because there is within us a divided mind—half disposed to do the will of God, half disposed to limit the doing of His will by consideration of what is more agreeable to us, and more in accordance with our own. Thus with the sense of estrangement there comes the sense of our very deepest need, the need of reconciliation, by which our affections and purposes and thought and will shall be brought into complete accord with the will of God concerning us. By this sense of need, made ever more acute and deeper through frequent failure and hard conflict, the soul is drawn yet closer to the Lord, with the full persuasion that He alone can dispel the darkness and satisfy the need He has revealed. And still the closer anyone is drawn to Christ, the more deeply does he feel his distance from Him. It is no morbid self-depreciation that has led the greatest saints to feel themselves the chief of sinners. It is just as the filial spirit is formed within that one feels more deeply the glory of the Perfect Son, and becomes more deeply sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of disobedience to the Father's will. It is in the soul already on its way to Christ, and standing in the light that streams from Him, that there rises up the sense of guilt, which is the quality that attaches to all wilful transgression, and is ever according to the knowledge possessed by the transgressor. Guilt indeed is like the shadow whose very existence bears witness to the light, and which is faint or deep according as the light is strong or

feeble. There is no shadow where there is no light, and the intensity of the light determines the depth of the shadow. Even so there is no guilt where there is no moral light, for moral responsibility depends on moral enlightenment, and the degree of enlightenment determines the measure of the guilt. Our Lord set this before us plainly when He said: "This is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil":[1] and again when He said; "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin."[2] Any object that intercepts the light casts a shadow, and the shadow must remain till the object be removed, unless the light be extinguished or withdrawn. Even so the light of the knowledge of the will of God shines upon the soul from Jesus Christ, with a clearness and intensity that increase as we draw nearer to Him; and as our self-will rises up in resistance to the divine will the dark shadow of guilt falls on us, and it can never be taken away by any means save that which brings the resistance of our self-will to an end.

To the soul that still maintains its trust in Christ this sense of guilt and sin becomes the occasion of fresh and fuller revelations of His grace and power. He gives us full assurance of divine forgiveness which satisfies our utmost need and fills the soul with confidence and hope. He quickens and sustains within us that sense of the righteousness and love of

[1] Jno. iii. 19. (Possibly the words are those of the Evangelist.)
[2] Jno. xv. 22.

God which subdues the self-will that has rebelled against Him. And Christ Himself grows upon us through such experience of His power to save. The nature of His authority is better understood, and with the better understanding of it there comes a more complete submission to it; it is less and less the authority of law, more and more the authority of love, and with an ever increasing power the love of Christ constrains us to larger trust, completer self-denial, and heartier service. The Cross of Christ grows luminous as the revelation of divine love that would stoop to lowest depths, and count no sacrifice too great, to secure the redemption and eternal glory of mankind, and as the very symbol of the freedom wherewith Christ would make us free.

It is not possible to notice here, except in the briefest and most general way, the interruptions that so frequently arise in the course of Christian experiences, and the causes to which they may be due. Some are hindered and harassed by intellectual perplexities, and grave doubts trouble their confidence in Christ. These doubts are so various in their nature, in the subjects they concern, and the sources whence they come, that it may be impossible to suggest a method of dealing with them that shall be suitable in every case. But it would seem that the actual experience of those whose faith survives all intellectual shocks, and even gains by reason of them in firmness and in strength, affords some helpful light, and this experience is accurately indicated when it is said that those who have once recognized the authority of Christ, and have felt the power of

His grace within their hearts, cannot discover any substitute for Him, or rest in the belief that the place which He was once supposed to occupy is really vacant. Again and again, from the depths of darkness and despair, they are brought back to Him with a renewed confidence born of the deep conviction that finds expression in the words: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." [1]

To bring his life and all his conduct into harmony with this conviction is the great task of the Christian; and it is not from the side of the intellect that his chief hindrances arise, as he addresses himself to its discharge. The mind may be completely satisfied, the conscience fully convinced, and yet the will may be sluggish or rebellious, the affections cold, the heart irresponsive to the claims that have been abundantly established at the bar of reason. It is not because the intellect forbids or restrains the exercise of faith, but because faith lags far behind the intellectual conviction, that Christian progress is delayed. "Would to God," exclaimed Coleridge, in words that find an echo in multitudes of hearts—"Would to God that my faith, that faith which works on the whole man, confirming and conforming, were but in just proportion to my belief, to the full acquiescence of my intellect, and the deep consent of my conscience." [2]

Amid all conflicts and delays there seems ever to be growing up within the heart which is seriously occupied with Christ and His claims, an irresistible

[1] Jno. vi. 68.

[2] Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit. Letter 1, pp. 7, 8. (Ed. Pickering, 1849.)

conviction that inspires the most lively confidence and hope. It is the conviction that we are occupied with Christ because He is occupied with us, and that His hold upon us is firmer than our hold on Him. We have a sense most real and deep, however hard it may be to explain it, that all the aspirations and purposes that lead the soul towards Christ, and make Him so welcome, bear witness to the working of a power within that is not of ourselves. It is as if a wise and gentle hand were laid upon us for our encouragement and guidance. It may be hard to explain it, but the submission to Christ, which is the abiding condition of conscious life in Him, requires us to accept the interpretation that He gives; and so in this gracious power whose presence we have felt within as a constraining and restraining force, we recognize the Spirit that He promised to bestow, the Spirit that cleanses and quickens and sanctifies the soul, that convinces us of righteousness and sin, and leads us into all truth. Through the Spirit the life of Christ is ever communicated to us in increasing measure according to our faith,

> "And every virtue we possess,
> And every conquest won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone."

Now all these experiences which have been noted as characteristic of the Christian life—the vivid sense of sin and guilt, and of divine grace and righteousness, the fightings and the fears, the conflicts and the doubts, and the sense of a gracious power that strives within us for the mastery—experiences which in some degree

are probably known and shared by all—combine to emphasize and press home the deep need of reconciliation; and the course of the conscious life in Christ is marked by the gradual attainment of this blessedness, by a progressive reconciliation to the Father. Through Christ the soul is brought into its right relation to God, which is a relation of filial trust and love.

If we consider how this comes about, how it is really accomplished in the case of any one of us, we shall perceive that the first thing Christ gives to us, and His most precious gift, is that knowledge of God which is eternal life. He is the revelation of the Father. He makes known the dispositions of God towards man, and His will concerning man, and this not simply by statements that He makes, but by the Perfect Sonship He exhibits. A relationship cannot be made known by mere words: to name it is not enough to make it known; it can only be revealed by one who actually sustains it, and only perfectly revealed by one who perfectly fulfils the obligations it involves. It is the whole attitude of Christ towards God, even more than His authoritative words about Him, that enables us to know God as He is.

The relationship of God to man which Christ reveals is a universal one, which exists before it is discerned, and persists although it be denied; it is involuntary and indestructible. Man is by nature the child of God; this fact explains Christ's presence in the world, and is presupposed in the very offer of reconciliation. But the relationship involves obligations, and is only perfected as these are recognized and fulfilled. One who

is a son by nature, and a son by name, may yet be truly said, as many a sorrowing parent knows, to be no son at all. In the deepest sense men are sons of God only through faith in Jesus Christ; from Him alone do they derive the right and the power to become God's children. Our Lord clearly marked the distinction between the actual and possible relation,—between the relation that all sustain to God by the constitution of their nature, and that into which He would lead them through the free submission of their will,—when He said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; *that ye may be sons of your Father* who is in heaven."[1] The real sonship involves a moral likeness between the father and the child, and the first thing demanded from the child, as the root of every filial grace, and the basis of right relation to its father, is simple trust; and the child must know the father who invites his trust before he can trust him as he ought. Christ gives us this knowledge of the Heavenly Father; to trust Him is to trust the Father He reveals; and so as many as receive Him are justified, brought into their right attitude towards God, by reason of their faith. Thus the reconciliation begins, and through the obedience of faith it is rendered ever more and more complete. A growing consciousness of God, an increasing joy in His service, a larger freedom in the doing of His will, mark its progress in the soul. And when these fail, as fail they often do, when clouds and darkness seem to hide the Father's face, when there is little joy and freedom in His service, but rather a sense of

[1] Matt. v. 44, 45.

weariness and bondage, the failure is occasioned by neglect of filial duty, by some disloyalty to Christ, by some attempt to bring His high demands down to the level of our inclinations; and thus reminds us how far we are as yet from being truly and perfectly reconciled to God.

Now that Jesus Christ is the source and sustenance of filial confidence in God is matter of clear knowledge. As He reveals to us the Father who claims our trust, so does He quicken in our hearts the trust the Father claims. The life to which He calls us, the life to which by His grace we are enabled to attain, is so closely and continuously dependent upon Him, that we speak of it, and can only speak of it, as life in Christ. But for Him it could never have begun, but for Him it could not be maintained. It depends on Him as closely and as evidently as the branch depends upon the vine. Everything that is most truly characteristic of it—its spirit, its temper, its purposes, its affections and its thoughts, are derived from Him. He dictates its aims, supplies its standards of judgments and estimates of value, interprets its experiences, reveals its relations, beatitudes and laws. When it languishes within us He restores it. When our vision of God is darkened by reason of our fears, it is Christ who clears away the clouds and places us once again in the sunshine of the Father's love. When our failures and sins have made us sad and hopeless, He moves our hearts again to true repentance, renews the assurance of divine forgiveness, and encourages us to go rejoicing on our way. A life thus consciously and

constantly dependent upon Christ is indeed most faithfully described as a conscious life in Him.

This consciousness of dependence upon Christ must needs be attended by a growing sense of His infinite significance. The experience of St. Paul may here again be recalled to mind as illustrating what others have also in their measure found true. We see how Christ continually grew on the Apostle. He was ever making new discoveries of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Christ. The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians enable us to understand the progress that Paul made in the understanding of his Lord; he could not have written them at any early stage in his career as a Christian. It was long and close communion with his Lord, long and various experience of his absolute dependence upon Christ, that enabled him to behold those visions of the eternal power and glory which filled his soul with such adoring wonder. And as Christ thus grew on the Apostle, as he became more and more sensible of His divine majesty, so much the more did he marvel at His condescension and His love.

It is even so now with those who follow Paul in that submission to Christ which he called on all to make, and which in his own case was so complete. The more we apprehend the dignity and glory of His nature, the more we contemplate the steadfast obedience of His perfect sonship, in its contrast with that of our own unfilial and inconstant hearts, the more deeply do we feel the riches of the grace and the wonder of the love that led Him to become in all things like unto His brethren that He might lead

many sons to glory. The growing sense of the greatness of the love of Christ is the richest fruit of conscious life in Him. And the more His love is felt in all its tenderness and strength, the more powerfully are our hearts drawn out towards Him. His love constrains us to more watchful obedience, and a more complete surrender of ourselves unto His service; self grows less and less till it is lost in Christ, and in the conscious possession of a life which, despite its clinging imperfections, and the manifold infirmities arising from weights not yet completely laid aside,—is yet in its guiding principles, and inspiring affections, of Christ, and through Christ, and in Christ, we each must say—with fervent gratitude, with deep humility, but still with perfect confidence,—"I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."[1]

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

V.

THE ATONEMENT

ROBERT FORMAN HORTON.

The Atonement.

Das Evangelium ist in die Welt eingetreten, nicht als eine Lehre, sondern als eine frohe Botschaft und als eine Kraft des Geistes Gottes ursprünglich in den Formen des Judenthums.
HARNACK.

IT is a wise saying that no inconsiderable part of wisdom consists in knowing what questions ought to be asked. For frequently the best answer to a question is that it cannot be answered; and, that once settled, the reverent mind will recall its forces from the fruitless quest, and confine its labour within the limits imposed. In the elastic eagerness of inexperience, mankind will try to the utmost the paths of speculation, and it is part of our discipline to make such trials; but the wise will learn to draw a line where inquiry discovers nothing but shifting sands, and will part from those futile spirits, who, for ever questioning, never come to a knowledge of the truth,

And find no end in wandering mazes lost.

It has been the misfortune of Theology that this wisdom has been too rare. In no department of

human thought have men been so unwilling to confess themselves baffled. Here, thinkers, dealing avowedly with the vast spaces of the unknown, have reared unsubstantial structures which have, for a time, been accepted as real, because ordinary men cannot cross the aërial void to question the foundations. An admission of ignorance in theology will sometimes be better than the stoutest claim to knowledge; and an age which is learning the importance of proof, and the scientific obligation to accept only what is proved, will only recover confidence in its religious leaders when it finds them self-critical in dogmatizing, and anxious to encamp as far as possible on the hither side of infallibility.

The object of the present essay is to advocate this sobriety of assertion in dealing with the question of the Atonement. It may be a duty on the one hand to maintain that the death of Christ is the means by which sin is pardoned and reconciliation between God and man effected, and yet, on the other hand, to own that no real explanation of it can be found. We may be required to preach "Christ and Him crucified," and to glory in nothing but the cross, as St. Paul did, and yet scrupulously to abstain from interpretations of the fact. If explanations lessen its efficacy by injuring its credibility, it is better to place the method of reconciliation among the mysteries of God which men and angels desire to search into in vain.

The history of Christian thought upon the subject is instructive. There has never been a period

when the Church has ceased to believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and yet the precise operation of His death has seldom been a matter of specific inquiry; and, broadly speaking, doubt has only arisen when some crude and misleading theory has exposed the truth to adverse criticism. It may be well to illustrate this position by a few examples.

The writings which have come down to us from what is called the Sub-Apostolic Age contain no independent and searching reflections on the connection between the saving work of Christ, and His death upon the cross. The lustre of the fact seemed to forbid inquiry into its nature. The spirit of that glowing time is expressed in the Eucharistic prayer of the *Didaché:* "We give thanks to Thee, Holy Father, for Thy holy name which Thou didst cause to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which Thou didst make known to us through Jesus, Thy servant."[1] A period of vivid spiritual experience and conscious realization of Christ is not favourable for curious inquiry into the nature of His work. But in the second century the Church Fathers were tempted to meet heresies with speculations. Irenæus gave a specific meaning to the idea of the ransom which the Saviour paid. Men were in the service of the Devil, and the death of Christ was the price paid to liberate them.[2] There

[1] Διδαχὴ τῶν ιβ' Ἀποστόλων, x. 2.

[2] Irenæus adv. Hær. v. i. 1. Irenæus avoids, by an ambiguity of language, the offensive implication that the ransom was actually paid to the Devil. "Ea quæ sunt sua redimens (sc. Christ), ab eo (sc. the Devil), non cum vi, quem-

was no elaborate theory in this statement. Origen, however, developed the hint. The transaction was conceived as a lawful bargain. God offers to the Devil the soul of Christ in exchange for the souls of men, which, owing to Adam's sin, he had acquired; though, Origen adds, the Devil was outwitted, because, as God knew, the soul of Christ could not be permanently held in the Devil's power. Here was an interpretation, an idea, which found a congenial soil among the juristic theologians of the West, and, notwithstanding its *naïveté*, its crudity, its immorality, it held its place in Christian thought for a thousand years.

Side by side, however, with this primitive notion, another view, favoured by Origen, gradually presented itself. This was the view: that in order that sin should be forgiven, an offering must be made to God, and this offering was found in the body of Christ. The two theories are mutually inconsistent; for the death of Christ cannot be regarded as a ransom paid to the Devil by God, and as a substitutionary offering made to God by Christ. But both of these speculations travelled out into the world to awake discussion, questioning, and doubt.

admodum ille initio dominabatur nostri, ea quæ non erant sua insatiabiliter rapiens, sed *secundum suadelam*, quemadmodum decebat deum suadantem et non vim inferentem, accipere quæ vellet, ut neque quod est justum confringeretur neque antiqua plasmatio dei deperiret." Though *secundum suadelam* looks as if Irenæus thought the suasion was applied to the Devil who had unlawfully possessed himself of men, it is quite possible that, as Gieseler and Hagenback think, it was man himself, the slave of the Devil, who was, in Irenæus' view, persuaded to return to his rightful Lord.

Anselm enjoys the credit of having discredited the quaint notion of the ransom being paid to the Devil, though it found favour again with the theologians of the Reformation. But he was tempted to construct a theory of his own. Strictly speaking, the *Cur Deus Homo*, which appeared at the beginning of the twelfth Christian century, is the first systematic attempt to explain the Atonement. This, in itself, is highly significant. The theories of Origen were incidental, and the idea of propitiating God (*satisfacere Deo*, and *promereri Deum*), which occurs in Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose, is simply a Scripture phrase interpreted in terms of Roman Law, implying no original interpretation on the part of those who used it. But Anselm made a serious attempt to gather up the best thought of his age and to rationally explain the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

What was his explanation? The honour of God was injured by human sin, and must in some way be repaired. The reparation must be something over and above the repentance and the amendment of sinners.[1] The injured dignity of God demands reparation before pardon can be thought of. It would be highly unbecoming of God to remit sin without it.[2] On the one hand man must make this satisfaction himself, on the other hand no one can make it but God.[3] Hence

[1] *Cur Deus Homo*, i. 11. Nec sufficit solummodo reddere quod ablatum est sed pro contumelia illata plus debet reddere quam abstulit.

[2] *Cur Deus Homo*, i. 12. Non decet Deum peccatum sic impunitum dimittere.

[3] *Cur Deus Homo*, ii. 6. Non ergo potest hanc satisfactionem facere nisi Deus.

the necessity for a God-man (*Deus homo*). But how is even a God-man to make the reparation? He must offer something to God which is not already due to Him. But love and obedience and goodness are due to God even from the God-man. There is only one thing which could be rendered over and above the legal dues, viz., a death.[1] This offering of death, voluntarily made to God, has an infinite value to balance all sins. God says now to man, Accept my Only-begotten, and give Him for thyself, and the Son Himself says, Take Me, and redeem thyself.[2]

This was the first systematic attempt to explain the doctrine of the Atonement, and, notwithstanding all that has been said and written since the *Cur Deus Homo* was composed, it cannot fairly be said that any theory is, on the whole, better or more convincing. And yet how completely it justifies the judgment of Harnack, that it is in a region of thought which is too abstract and unreal, and is like the reasoning of a clever child upon the great subject.[3] It is almost unnecessary to enter into any criticism of the position. The objections are innumerable, and they accumulate as we go forward. But the difficulties on the surface of the theory are decisive. What kind of Being is the God who is presupposed

[1] *Cur Deus Homo*, ch. ii. 10, 11. Nullatenus se ipsum potest homo magis dare Deo quam cum se morti tradit ad honorem illius.

[2] *Cur Deus Homo*, ii. 20. Deus pater dicit: Accipe Unigenitum meum et da pro te; et ipse Filius: Tolle me et redime te.

The English reader can study Anselm's famous tractate in Mr. Prout's translation, published by the R.T.S.

[3] Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, iii. 356.

by such a theory? He is a Roman emperor on the large scale, the figure-head of a great juristic system, who charges his subjects with *læsa majestas*, a treason against his person. This limitation is common to Anselm with all the Fathers of the West, who were dominated by the political and juristic ideas in the midst of which they lived. But what real satisfaction can there be for injured dignity—and inflicted contumely—even to a Roman emperor in the mere death of any one, and especially in the death of one who is nearest and dearest to him? Granted that there might be an equivalent in worth between the sufferings of a God-man and the sufferings of the whole sinful race of men, yet there is no explanation why God should accept the one for the other, and the personal resentment which can in this way be allayed is clearly the resentment of a person very different from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It requires little evidence to show that this theory —valuable as Anselm's service was in rebutting the false Ransom-theory of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa—would bring the whole doctrine into question and suspicion. The truth was dragged down from the mysterious regions of the Divine nature and flung into a Roman basilica for the learned jurisconsults of the Church to pull to pieces and to discuss. Naturally enough the first result of constructing so crude an argument was to cast discredit on the whole conception of an objective atonement, and like many speculations of a similar kind since, to elicit what is called, in a depreciatory sense, a *moral theory* of the subject. Abélard gave expression to this pro-

test and formulated the view, which still satisfies many modern believers, that we are "justified in the blood of Christ and reconciled to God, because, through the singular grace shown to us in His Son taking upon Him our nature, and in His instruction of us by word and example, carried through even to death, He bound us to Himself by larger bonds of love, so that fired by such a great gift of divine grace true love shrinks from bearing nothing for His sake." [1]

If this moral theory seems inadequate, if orthodoxy condemns the rejection of the objective sacrifice, it should be remembered that Abélard is the natural complement of Anselm, and that the attempt to formulate a theory of the inscrutable always provokes a revolt against the fact which the theory has distorted.

To pass to another illustration of this truth. The Reformation did not in the first instance touch the doctrine of Atonement; from Wycliffe downwards the Reformers were occupied in urging upon men the appropriation by repentance and faith of the salvation which had been secured by it. When, however, Protestant speculation began to investigate the fact which was the ground of pardon, it unhappily laid stress on an idea which was to be fruitful in mischief. "How," asks Gerhard, for example, "would Christ have really taken our sins upon Himself and offered a complete satisfaction unless He had really felt the wrath of God, which is by an indissoluble bond connected with sins? How would He have redeemed us

[1] Abélard. Commentary on the Romans, lib. ii. (Opp. p. 550.)

from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, unless He had endured the judgment of the angry God?"[1] Here was a new interpretation, an interpretation which Bellarmine did not hesitate to pronounce "an unheard-of heresy." Christ offered an Atonement by taking upon Himself the vindictive wrath of God, which should have fallen upon guilty men, and by receiving the full punishment of sin in our stead. According to Biblical ideas, as Pfleiderer says, there is no such thing as a vicarious *punishment* of Christ, for vicarious suffering is expiation instead of punishment. But now a certain school of pietism committed itself to the idea that God punished Christ, punished an innocent person for the guilty, and pardoned men because He had thus discharged His anger against men on the head of His Son. It was this perversion of Biblical truth, offered as an interpretation of the Atonement, which invited the attack of Socinus, and has for two centuries past driven numberless minds that are susceptible of clear thinking and of moral discrimination into the position of Unitarianism. This result was further accelerated by the sensuous and unthinking insistence on the Blood and the physical sufferings of Christ which became common with Zinzendorf and his followers. It is a theory of the Atonement far removed from the essential teaching of the New Testament, invented by an unintelligent mysticism and supported by the false exegesis of a few proof-texts, which, more than any other single cause, has produced the

[1] "Loci Theologici," xvii. 2, c. 54.

widespread alienation of thoughtful men from Evangelical Christianity in the modern world.

It is with much hesitation that the present writer carries the illustration of the theme a step further. But in Dr. Dale's classical work on the Atonement many readers have experienced a disappointment, for which, considering the author's learning, eloquence and zeal, it seems difficult to account. Through the first eight chapters of the book the reader is led with acquiescence if not with conviction; the evidence is marshalled in such a way that the boldest may hesitate to assail it. But in the concluding chapters the author attempts in the most modest and tentative way to lay down the lines of a theory to explain the fact of the Atonement on which he has been insisting. The theory is a modification of Anselm's. The eternal law of righteousness takes the place of the personal honour of God. This law is violated by sin, and must be repaired by some satisfaction offered to it. The sufferings of Christ furnish this reparation.[1] But how and why? Briefly, because the person of Christ is identical with the law of righteousness on the one hand, and on the other hand Christ Himself holds an essential relation to the human race, which was originally made in His image. In place of the punishment which should rightly fall on man from the violated law of righteousness, the law itself, in the person of Jesus, endures the sufferings which punishment would have entailed. "In the death of Christ He to whom it belongs to inflict suffering endures suffering instead of inflicting it." [2]

[1] *The Atonement*, by R. W. Dale, M.A. (13th edition), p. 391. [2] Ibid. p. 393.

The theory does not satisfy the reader. It is, as Harnack said of its predecessor, "in a region of abstract thought," and if it is not exposed to the further charge that it is "like the speculation of a clever child upon the subject," that is only because the author himself feels the insufficiency of the explanation and never suggests that it is conclusive or free from difficulty. The theory, like that of Anselm, or like the later conception of Grotius, that the death of Christ was a penal example to show God's wrath against sin, and to serve as a warning against future sins, still breathes the atmosphere of earthly law courts. We are held in a region of arguable presuppositions. We do not feel that the Person of God is relieved from the charge of hardness and even egoism by the conventional device of regarding Him under the abstract guise of The Eternal Law of Righteousness. We are still without any valid instances in human experience to illustrate how a broken *law* can be repaired by suffering the penalty which it ought to inflict. Granting fully the essential difficulty there is in the remission of sins, conceding that God is bound by His own nature to punish sins, we cannot see the intrinsic reasonableness of suffering Himself, instead of inflicting, the punishment, or how from self-inflicted pain He derives the power to forgive sins. If the law were an entity distinct from Himself, He might be compelled to offer it satisfaction; but if the law is identical with Himself, we get no glimmer of reason why He should be obliged to make a suffering of His own the antecedent condition of pardoning its violation, or

how the suffering endured should have any vital relation with those who had transgressed the law. It is not that the theory is illogical or impossible, but rather that it starts from presuppositions which seem arbitrary, and requires us to put ourselves in a certain mental attitude of concession before it carries any conviction to the understanding.

Thus, even in Dr. Dale's masterly book, we cannot say that an explanation of the Atonement has been given. But, *si ille tali ingenio exitum non reperiebat, quis nunc reperiet?*[1] The profound respect which this generation feels for Dr. Dale will incline us to the conclusion that if his exposition leaves us unsatisfied, the fault lies not in the exponent but in the question itself. In a word, the attempt to explain the Atonement is a labour which cannot have a completely satisfying conclusion. It was the sagacious opinion of Gregory of Nazianzus[2] that speculations about the death of Christ should be ranked with questions concerning the creation of the world, the nature and matter of the soul, the resurrection, the judgment—questions on which correct ideas may be useful, but mistaken ideas are not dangerous. It would, indeed, be a great, though unexpected, result of all the theorizing on the subject from Irenæus to Dr. Dale, if we were led back to this verdict of Gregory's.

It is no ground for wonder if a review of the theories which have been propounded and of the

[1] Cic. ad Att. xiv. 1.

[2] Orat. xxxiii. p. 536; cf. Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, ii. 60.

disastrous effects which have flowed from their crudeness or grossness should have led many Christian men to put the whole subject of the Lord's death in the background, and to treat it simply as an incident, an inevitable incident, in the process of His Incarnation. What cannot be explained, they are inclined to say, cannot be believed; for the modern mind does not favour the old formula, *credimus ut intelligamus.*

But the decisive objection to this facile course is that it involves a complete break with the Apostolic writings. Though it is not possible here to undertake a review of the New Testament teaching on the subject, even a very cursory study must convince the reader that, as the narrative of the Crucifixion occupies more than a quarter of the Evangelic record, so the Apostolic writers are dominated by the memory of the Cross, which is in most instances the starting-point of their teaching and the real centre of their Gospel.

Any one reading the Four Gospels for the first time would almost inevitably inquire: Why is such unusual prominence given to the exit from a life which seems at first glance far more remarkable in its course than in its close? For in the years of active work and teaching, the central Figure shines with unclouded majesty, while the final scene is strangely clouded with humiliation, lamentation, and apparent defeat. Is the narrative of the death circumstantial in order to give its due value to the fact of the Resurrection? Or does the story itself give any indication of the reason for this un-

usual emphasis? One cannot but be arrested by certain remarkable sayings, which are the more striking because they are expressed with a severe restraint, and with a marked absence of elaboration or even comment. For instance, if the words of Matt. xx. 28, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many" were the only light shed upon the inquiry, we should be forced to the conviction that we had a clue to that laborious narrative. The purpose of Jesus was to serve men, to serve them by giving His life, and to give His life as a ransom, which would, so the expression implies, purchase the lives of many otherwise forfeited. But these words do not stand alone. In another place, the Lord exclaims, as if with a sense of growing pressure in the approach of a great crisis, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it is accomplished."[1] Many expressions in the Fourth Gospel are still more explicit, and though some of them bear the impress of the author's style, others are so characteristic that they carry their own evidence upon them. "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (i. 29). "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up . . . . for God sent the Son into the world . . . . that the world may be saved through Him" (iii. 14-17). "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep . . . . my life I lay down for the sheep . . . . for this the Father loves me, that I lay down my

[1] Lu. xii. 50.

life . . . . no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (x. 11, 15, 17, 18). In this Gospel also, there is abundant testimony to the agitation of spirit which Jesus experienced in contemplation of the approaching end. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? Nay, for this cause came I to this hour. . . . . Now is judgment passing on this world, now the prince of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. And this he said, signifying by what death he was about to die" (xii. 27, 30, 31). "Greater love than this," He says, "no man has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (xv. 14). "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if any one eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (vi. 51).

To return to the Synoptics, the language used at the Last Supper appears in harmony with the previous hints which the Lord had given: "Taking bread, he gave thanks and broke, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you . . . . and in like manner the cup after they had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, that which is poured out for you;"[1] or as otherwise reported, "This is my blood of the Testament which is poured out for many for the remission of sins."[2] In the light of these indications we read

[1] Lu. xxii. 19, 20. [2] Matt. xxvi. 28.

the detailed account of the Agony in the Garden.[1] This is surely no common sorrow, no mere anticipation of the ordinary death-stroke. "He began to be sorrowful and dismayed." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful to death." "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "And His sweat was as it were drops of blood descending to the ground."[2] And when at last the fatal moment has come, there is no quiet passing of this pure and strong soul, but a bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[3] and a sudden snapping of the cord of life, which can be explained only by the supposition that the heart was literally broken.[4] And as the sufferings had been anticipated by the words already quoted, so they are explained by the words in the lips of the risen Lord towards the end of the Third Gospel, "So it is written that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day, and that there should be preached on the ground of his name repentance and remission of sins to all nations."

It is impossible for us even now to read the fourfold narrative without being impressed with the significance of that death, consciously faced, and victoriously endured, to ransom men from sin, and

[1] Matt. xxvi. 36–44.

[2] Lu. xxii. 44.

[3] Matt. xxvii. 46.

[4] Dr. Dale (*Atonement*, App. D), endorses Dr. Stroud's famous argument that the "blood and water" which issued from the side of the Crucified Lord, indicate "a collection of blood effused into the distended sac of the pericardium in consequence of rupture of the heart, and afterwards separated, as is usual with extravasated blood, into those two parts, viz.: crassamentum, or red clot, and watery serum" (p. 464, fifteenth edition).

to secure their eternal life. Is there any ground for wonder that the Apostles themselves were impressed in the same way, and made the marvellous fact the constant theme of their preaching? That this was so, a careful consideration of the other New Testament literature puts beyond a doubt.

In the specimens of the apostolic preaching which occur in the *Acts of the Apostles*, it would not be true to say that any exclusive emphasis is laid upon the Death of Christ. It would be, on the whole, nearer the mark to say that the crime of the Crucifixion is urged as a motive of repentance, and the fact of the resurrection as a proof that God is willing to pardon. The first message of the Apostles was evidently the proclamation of "Jesus and the resurrection" rather than "Christ and Him crucified." But there are not wanting in the *Acts* expressions, which, in the light of what we have seen in the Gospels, are susceptible of only one interpretation, expressions which suggest that the objective effects of the sacrifice on the Cross were always presupposed even when appeals were made to other aspects of the fact and based on slightly different motives. The crucified Jesus is described as the only name which has been given among men by which we must be saved.[1] And if it be said that the form of the argument in this place suggests rather "in spite of His crucifixion," than "by means of His crucifixion," or if in another place, "to him give all the prophets witness that everyone who believes in him receives remission

[1] Acts iv. 12.

of sins through His name,"[1] there may seem to be a careful avoidance of any specific connection between pardon of sin and the offering on the cross, there is one passage, at any rate, in which these records speak with great directness on the subject, the passage in which St. Paul bids the elders from Ephesus to "feed the Church of God, which He purchased through His own blood."[2] We may assume that while the public discourses of the Apostles referred in general terms to Jesus, "exalted to give repentance and remission of sins," and invited men to receive the pardon which was freely offered, whenever a closer definition of the remission was demanded, it was the custom to point to the whole tragedy such as it appears in the Gospel narratives, and to explain that Christ had shed His blood for the remission of sins, giving His life a ransom for many. In this respect we cannot but accept that passage before quoted from the author's first treatise[3] as the key to some of the looser expressions in the second.

But when we turn from the popular addresses of the Apostles to those letters in which they sought to define and to develop the saving doctrine which they had found in Christ, there can be but little question about the place which the Death on the Cross had assumed in their experience and their thought. In the Epistles an insistence is laid on the actual sacrifice of the life

[1] Acts x. 43, to which may be added xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you that through this man, remission of sins is declared unto you," and xvi. 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

[2] Acts xx. 28.

[3] Lu. xxiv. 46, 47.

of Christ as the ground of pardon and the means of salvation, which seems to throw into the background all the story of the Lord's earthly activity, and to isolate the death from the personality and the character of the victim in such a way that the Epistles, we are bound to maintain, would be a most one-sided and unsatisfactory account of Christianity if, in the Providence of God, the full picture of Jesus Himself had not been preserved in the memorials of the four Evangelists.

The place which the Death on the Cross and the salvation received through it hold in the *Epistle of Peter*[1] is all the more remarkable because it is indicated by a sidelight. The author is not writing about the way of salvation from sin, but about the patient endurance of suffering, and his mind is so preoccupied with the great and overshadowing sacrifice of Jesus that he instinctively turns to that for an illustration and an example, and having turned to it is constrained to pause and pour out his soul for a moment upon the familiar theme. A special treatise on the Atonement would not have been so significant of the channels in which apostolic feeling habitually ran as these *obiter dicta* of St. Peter's first Epistle.[2] Whatever conception might underlie the expressions, it is evident that before the writer's eye there always stood the scene which he had witnessed on Calvary, and that he connected the new life of good-

[1] It is not thought necessary, here or elsewhere in this essay, to discuss or to vindicate the authenticity of New Testament books. We are concerned with them only as the earliest testimony we possess to the impression which the work of Jesus had made upon his immediate followers.

[2] See 1 Pet. ii. 20-25 ; iii. 18, 19.

ness and Godliness which he and others were living with the actual suffering of his Lord who there had taken away his sins, and the sins of other sinful people.

In the letter which bears the name of John, the phrase "just for unjust" (1 Peter iii. 18) receives a further elucidation, and the transaction on the Cross is presented in harmony with what we just now read in the Gospel from the same hand.[1] Here, in the complete absence of anything that approaches to a deliberate theory, there is a little more specification than we have hitherto seen. The life of Jesus was given, the blood was shed. And this action of the Just One cleanses the unjust, undoes the works of the devil, and serves as a propitiation for sin. But lest we should think that the propitiation is offered to God, it is expressly declared that God Himself makes the propitiation. St. John sees the sacrifice of Calvary as a reversal of the heathen notion of sacrifice. Instead of sinful men bringing slaughtered hecatombs to pacify the angry Gods, there is a great propitiatory offering made before the eyes of sinful men, in which the whole action begins with God, proceeds through God, and ends in God.

But the largest place in the theological treatises of the New Testament is occupied by the Pauline writings, and according to the common notion these writings are characterized by a tendency to careful definition and dialectical elaboration. The common

[1] Read especially 1 John i. 7; ii. 2; iii. 8, 16; iv. 9, 10.

notion is far from being correct. The Pauline letters, so far from forming a careful system of doctrine fall into five distinct groups, each one of which occupies a standpoint of its own. But one thing is very noticeable: each one of these groups gives a striking prominence to the death of Christ upon the Cross as the ground of pardon and the means of salvation. Casting our eye over these groups in succession we may single out the salient points.

First of all come the early letters to the Thessalonians, which have no appearance of being theological treatises at all; but the underlying thought all through is expressed in a single phrase, "God did not appoint you unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that we may live together with Him."[1] It is an instinct with St. Paul, even when he is not thinking at all of the specific method of salvation to see in the death on the Cross a representative death, which signifies the destruction of our sinful nature, and the beginning of our spiritual life.

The second group of Pauline letters, *Galatians*, 1 *and* 2 *Corinthians*, and *Romans*, must be read as a whole in order to get any adequate idea of the absorption in the Redeemer's Cross and Passion, which forms the atmosphere of the Apostle's life. But a rapid *coup d'œil* over these four most significant writings will give a distinct, if not a complete, impression of the fact, which is now being illustrated. The mere mention of Christ's name is at any moment

[1] 1 Thess. v. 10.

sufficient to elicit from St. Paul an exclamation of wonder or gratitude from those depths of his spiritual consciousness, where he has, by identifying himself with his Saviour, obtained an understanding of what Christ accomplished.

The wonder or gratitude generally turns to that suffering of the Cross, which always rivets the attention of the suffering δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.[1] Thus at the beginning of *Galatians* the salutation of "peace from our Lord Jesus Christ" immediately evokes the expansive parenthesis "who gave himself for our sins, in order that he may deliver us"—the aorist tense, ἐξέληται, signifies a definite moment—as by a price paid down for a ransom "from the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father."[2] A little later on he describes his inner experience, "I live by faith, that of God's Son, who loved me and gave himself for me;"[3] where the conviction allows us no alternative but to suppose that the giving of Himself is identical with the crucifixion which is the central point of this appropriating experience. And if any doubt were possible, the next chapter would set it at rest, where reference is made to Paul's method of preaching as an attempt to depict before the eyes of his audience the Crucified Christ; and the meaning of the delineation is expressly given in the words, "Christ bought us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is every one that is hung on a tree."[4] Evidently he looks back upon

[1] Rom. i. 1.
[2] Gal. i. 4.
[3] Gal. ii. 20.
[4] Gal. iii. 1, 13.

those inexplicable sorrows and agonies of Christ as a proof that He was bearing a weight of human sin, and bearing it away, so that by the suffering deliverance was bought. Without any attempt, or any consciousness that there is need for an attempt, to define what the purchase was, to whom it was paid, or how there was any equivalent between the price and the benefit which was won, St. Paul's inward experience is this: The deliverance from the curse of the law which he had sought in vain by efforts of his own, had come to him by believingly accepting the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross as the sufficient discharge of debts which he himself was unable to pay.

From the Epistle which is so largely autobiographical we may now turn to the two letters which deal with the practical Christian life, and the one letter in which a doctrine of salvation is worked out with some air of systematic completeness. Look, for example,[1] at the passage which may be described as the charter and commission of all Christian teachers: "The love of Christ constrains us, as men who have come to the conclusion that one dying for all means that all died, and He died for all that they who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them. . . . It all proceeds from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ . . . the reconciliation consisting in this, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. . . . Him

[1] A reference to the other places in 1 and 2 Cor. must suffice. See 1 Cor. i. 30; iii. 11; v. 7; vi. 19; xv. 3. 2 Cor. iv. 10.

who knew no sin He made sin for us that we may become the righteousness of God in Him." [1] Here is the same specification that we have seen in St. John; the atonement (*καταλλαγή*) or as St. John called it the Propitiation (*ἱλασμός*) is a work carried out by God Himself. It is not man reconciling God, but God reconciling man; and it is accomplished by that mysterious occurrence on the Cross, in which the sinless Lord "was made sin," that sinful men might become sinless.

The inquiry should now turn to the exposition of Salvation by Faith given in the *Epistle to the Romans*, the book of the New Testament which has furnished the suggestions for Theories of the Atonement from Irenæus to Dr. Dale. Let the reader carefully consider Rom. iii. 23-26, iv. 25. Here is an unquestioning insistence upon the Blood of Jesus as the means of a propitiatory work between God and the soul, a ransom accomplished in Christ; and if we decline to follow hints which might lead us into theories far removed from the central idea, we gather at least this much, that God plans the offering of the life of Jesus, not indeed as a punishment inflicted on His Son, but that He may pass over men's sins without ceasing to be just, and that when this propitiatory offering had been made, if anyone believes in Jesus he can be at once justified. Man, who naturally misses and comes short of God's glory, makes up through faith in Christ the sad arrears, and is ransomed from his errors. Later on in the Epistle,

[1] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 18, 19, 21.

though there is no attempt to state a theory, the singular and exclusive emphasis upon the death of Christ becomes very impressive. "Christ, while we were yet weak, at the appointed season died for us who were not only weak but wicked.[1] . . . And God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinful Christ died for us. *A fortiori,* then, now that we are justified in His blood we shall be saved through Him from wrath." [2]

It is evident in what follows [3] that the argument is a little diverted by the attempt to connect the work of Christ in a loose parallelism with the story of Adam's fall. But one point stands out very clearly, viz. : that the death of Christ with all its undefined reconciling properties, is an act of splendid obedience, and that whoever can by faith become a sharer in that death may be regarded by God, no longer as a disobedient son of Adam, but as an obedient son of God. And a little further on the characteristically Pauline idea is worked out—the idea which lies at the root of all the theology of the Reformation—that whatever reconciling virtue or propitiatory significance may lie in

[1] This assonance of the ἀσθενῶν and the ἀσεβῶν should not be missed, Rom. v. 6, 8.

[2] Here is the first mention of the wrath of God against sin, the idea from which has sprung the revolting theory of the Pietists, that the Death of Christ is the Wrath of God breaking upon the head of the Son ; such an idea is reached by steadily ignoring the very distinctive lines of the Apostle's teaching, and by falling back on a misunderstood phrase from an ancient prophecy (Is. liii.) and the inapplicable expressions of a Messianic Psalm (Ps. xxii.); whatever is implied in the Desertion of the Cross, we have the clearest evidence that it cannot be explained as the Wrath of God falling on the object of His supreme love.

[3] Rom. v. 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 19.

the transaction of the Cross is only made ours by a mystical identification of ourselves with the Saviour through an active faith; "as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death . . . we were buried with Him . . . planted with Him in the likeness of His death . . . the old nature crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, so that we may no longer serve sin." [1] And laying stress on this idea of actual deliverance from sin, he concludes the sixth chapter with the exclamation that the "wages of sin is death," but, expressly avoiding the implication that the death of Christ is the wages of sin, or that the mystical death of the believer with Him is to be viewed in that light, he declares that "the free gift of God's grace is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." [2]

On the whole the bearing of this second group—this most important group—of the Pauline literature on our present subject is this:—In St. Paul's most active period of evangelic work he gave a unique prominence to the actual sufferings of the Cross as God's own appointed way of pardoning the sins of men and reconciling those who believe to Himself.

We should turn now to the third group of Pauline letters, *Philippians*, *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, the writings which contain the last words of St. Paul on the subject of the Redemption in Christ. It is noteworthy that in the profoundly spiritual letter to the Philippians, the death of the Cross does not occupy that almost exaggerated position of importance that

[1] Rom. vi. 5. [2] See also Rom. viii. 3, 4, 32.

we have just observed in the four great epistles. It falls into its place in the general work of Christ ; it is a part, if the conclusive part, yet only a part, of the self-emptying which lies at the root of Christ's redemptive undertaking.[1] In the other passage where he refers to it he alludes to that identification of faith with the Lord's death which evidently became to St. Paul more and more the secret of his spiritual life. His great desire is to know Christ "and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings by being assimilated with His death that he may attain the resurrection from the dead."[2]

The two kindred letters, the *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, require a more careful consideration, for in them not only do the ideas of St. Paul, which we have already seen, appear afresh, but there are several expressions which seem, at any rate *prima facie*, to furnish the suggestions of a theory of the Atonement. Christ is designated "The Beloved," and as the Beloved,[3] "in Him we have the ransoming through His blood, the remission of our sins," as if the love which the Father bears to Christ constitutes the validity of the Saviour's ransoming work. And the love which the Father bears to men is presently mentioned as the occasion of His raising us up and giving us a new life in Christ though we were in our failings quite dead.[4] Here is the suggestion, not of that federal headship of the race which St. Bernard[5] made the foundation of the atonement, but of a

[1] Phil. ii. 8.
[2] Phil. iii. 10.
[3] Eph. i. 6, 7.
[4] Eph. ii. 6, 7.
[5] Satisfecit Caput pro membris Christus pro visceribus suis.

relation existing between men and Christ on the ground that they were loved of God, but Christ is *The Beloved;* and because of this close relation, what The Beloved does is regarded by God as done by the whole race that He loves, and the death of Christ upon the cross draws all men together in a common death, reconciling them to one another, and thus united to The Beloved they are brought into His relation with the Father.[1] This power of love to bind God and Christ, Christ and men, men with one another, into a real solidarity is the keynote of this epistle. As beloved children we are to imitate our Father, we are to love "as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a savour of sweetness." The death of Christ is a passion of love to God, as it was dictated by God's passion of love to men. The offering consists in this unfaltering love, and the pain endured for love's sake touches the love of men. Into the same mystery a glimpse is obtained through the analogy of marriage, for Christ stands to men as a man to a wife whom he loves, and "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify it, having purged it in the laver of water in the word."[2] Here is the suggestion of a theory, a suggestion which was followed out by Abélard and by all those thinkers who have regarded the death of Christ as a manifestation of God's love, designed to awake in men a response of love. But no theologian has apparently followed out the hint that the real offering and sacrifice of Christ was indeed love, or the suggestion

[1] Eph. ii. 14-18. [2] Eph. v. 1, 2, 26.

of this epistle that the oneness of Christ with mankind is to be found in the bosom of God, the passion of love which He feels first to His only begotten Son, and secondly to the beings made in His image.

The scattered notices in the *Colossians* are less definite, but together with a firm reference to the "Blood of the Cross" there is the same importance attached to the essential relation between Christ and mankind, and the now familiar idea of St. Paul's, that we die in Christ's death, reappears. "God rescued us from the power of darkness," a power which is vested in certain "principalities and powers" vanquished on the cross when the condemnation of the law which is valid against us was nailed to the cross in Christ's sufferings, "and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have the ransoming, the remission of sins, Who is the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of all creation . . . and when we were estranged and enemies in thought," as it were, loved but not loving God, "in our evil deeds He reconciled us in the body of His flesh through death."[1] No further explication is given, but the death accomplished by Christ must be assimilated by faith if we are to find its efficacy; "buried with Him in baptism" we "died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God."[2]

These later epistles of St. Paul give the impression that in his growing Christian experience, he ceased almost entirely to dwell on any juridical or forensic aspect of the death, and dwelt more on the mystical

[1] Col. i. 13, 14, 21, 22, ii. 15. [2] Col. ii. 12; iii. 10.

significance of that complete offering of Christ upon the Cross, in which we become partakers by faith, dying with Christ and rising with Him to newness of life.

The fourth group of the Pauline literature, the *Pastoral Epistles*, furnish little that is distinctive in this connection, but they illustrate the firm hold which the figure of the ransom, entirely unexplained as it always continued to be, established on the terminology and thought of the Church. "One is God, one also is the human mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all."[1] "Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might ransom us," not from the devil, but "from all lawlessness, and purge for Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works . . . our Saviour God, not by works in the sphere of justice done by us, but according to His compassion, saved us through the laver of regeneration," viz. the burial with Christ in baptism, "and renewing of the Holy Ghost."[2] It is as if men were absolutely content to rest in the simple phraseology which Jesus had used Himself. He said that He came to give His life a ransom for many, and that ransom was to deliver men from their sins : it was the essence of faith to believe that He had done what He said, and men looked thankfully back to the sufferings of the Son of God, and made no question that by them deliverance had been won and might be enjoyed.

The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which may be said to

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. [2] Tit. ii. 13, 14; iii. 5, 6.

form by itself a fifth group of the Pauline literature, is mainly occupied with the presentation of the Christian Redemption from the standpoint of one who sees in it the antitype of a Jewish ritual and sacrificial system. The general remark may be hazarded that the author, looking on the whole manifestation of Christ from the nativity to Calvary, saw in it the fulfilment of every promise that was implied in the institution of the Temple and of the Law. It is of special interest, therefore, bearing in mind the nature of Atonement as it was understood in Mosaism, to examine the place which the actual death of Christ occupies in this treatise. "We see," says our author, "one who is put at some disadvantage even in comparison with angels, Jesus, on account of the suffering of death, crowned with a chaplet of glory and honour," like a victim led to the altar, "that by the grace of God he may taste death for every man," and though He was the final and efficient cause of all creation, there was a certain Divine fitness in bringing many sons to glory by perfecting the captain of their salvation through sufferings. He assumed flesh and blood, like His human brethren, "in order that through death He might destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil"; indeed, He put Himself in a position of assimilation with His brethren that He might, like Aaron, make a real propitiation for the sins of the people.[1] Here is a distinct significance given to the death of Christ, and an effect is attributed to it which is not elsewhere mentioned, the destruction not only

[1] Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15, 17.

of the works of the devil, but of the devil himself. A new idea also is introduced. Jesus is presented, not as the propitiation, according to St. John, not as the propitiatory, according to St. Paul, but as the High Priest who offers the propitiation.[1] The high priestly function of the Saviour is worked out with some enlargement in chapter v., and illustrated by reference to Melchizedek, the early king of Salem. But later on, the notion of the priestly office is reconciled with that of His being Himself the propitiation in the statement that, instead of offering the countless sacrifices which the law prescribed for Himself and for the people, He accomplished the end "once for all by offering Himself."[2] There is a striking contrast between this new sacrifice and those which formerly were offered, for "not through the blood of goats and heifers, but through His own blood, He entered once for all into the Holies, having found an eternal mode of ransoming." His death has become the ransom from the transgressions defined by the old covenant, so that those who are called as heirs of this eternal inheritance can receive the promise.[3] Here was the equivalent to those torrents of blood which flowed about the temple altar; the blood was but the type of remission, this self-offering of the high priest was an actual remission. "Once at the end of the ages has He been manifested for the removal of sin through His sacrifice—once has He been offered to bear the sins of many."[4] The idea constantly recurs: "This

[1] Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14.
[2] Heb. vii. 26.
[3] Heb. ix. 12, 15.
[4] Heb. ix. 22, 26, 28.

One having brought one sacrifice for sin for a perpetuity sat down at the right hand of God." His flesh is regarded as the veil, which being rent in death, admits us by a new and living way into the inner sanctuary of God.[1] And though now He is in the glory of His Father, our attention is turned back to His endurance of the Cross and contempt of the shame, and we are asked to consider Him not so much in His unapproachable exaltation as in the light of One who has endured such an antagonism of sinners to Himself,[2] as the voluntary, self-offered victim, who, "in order to sanctify the people through His blood suffered without the gate."[3]

Here, though there are many subjects for discussion, one thing seems to be indisputable: the actual death of Christ, regarded as the offering of Himself to God, not at all in a carnal sense, but "through the eternal spirit,"[4] spotless and undefiled, is the ransom from evil, the remission of sins for every one that believes. Evidently to the author, imbued with the ideas of the old covenant, the whole conception of such an atonement presents no difficulty at all. He does not feel the want of an explanation. He is only struck with the immense superiority of the new and living way to the old way, with which the Fathers had been forced to rest content. In place of the fallible and mortal priest, offering up animals, mere senseless carcasses,

[1] Heb. x. 10-14, 20.

[2] Heb. xii. 3. For the purposes of this essay it is not necessary to discuss the alternative reading ἑαυτούς, accepted by Westcott and Host, and by the revisers.

[3] Heb. xiii. 12.

[4] Heb. ix. 14.

without any inherent moral relation between the victim and the sinner, here was the glorious Son of God, humbling Himself that He might become our priest, and then offering up His own soul in a sacrifice of suffering, surrender, and death. This was at least a rational, a spiritual, a moral transaction—an actual mediation between God and man, not merely a symbol and a type. The change from the old covenant of shadows into this new covenant of the substance, might well indispose one to inquire too curiously into the inner *rationale* of the transcendent event on which the experienced salvation rested.

It seems hardly necessary in closing this hasty review of the New Testament writings to refer at any length to the Apocalypse. Though the Book dwells on the final Redemption rather than the events of the past, the Saviour appears always not only as One who had been dead and was alive again, but as the Lamb that had been slain. Praise is rendered to Him as one that "loves us and ransomed us from our sins by His blood."[1] "These are they," says the angel, "that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb."[2] And the song of the redeemed is "Worthy art thou to receive the book and to open the seals, because thou wast slain and didst purchase us for God in Thy blood." If we are right in assigning this book to the period which produced the second and third groups of the Pauline Letters, we may observe how the writers who wrote between the time of Christ's death and the destruction of Jeru-

[1] Rev. i. 5. [2] Rev. vii. 14.

salem kept their eyes riveted on the Cross and the Crucified One. The Christ they knew, the only Christ of whom they could speak, was He who had died for our sins and risen again for our justification.

It is impossible to glance over the passages thus hastily reviewed without reaching the conclusion that the Lord and His Apostles alike set His death upon the Cross in a place by itself, and though never on the whole isolating it from other parts of the evangelic history, yet in a special way connected the reconciliation between God and man through the forgiveness of sins with that unique event. There is no room for an opinion that to them the death was merely an episode, an inevitable episode, of His human life. It stands to them as a transaction to which His human life led up, for which it was undertaken, a transaction which was only effectual, indeed, because of what He was, but might, nevertheless, have remained undone, though He was what He was, but for the great love of God, and the consenting love of the Son. He might have lived—so He and His Apostles evidently thought—He might have shown the same characteristics of mercy and truth, He might have uttered the same translucent precepts of conduct, and yet have evaded the crucial point, letting the cup pass from Him, and leaving the work for which He had come, unaccomplished. In addition to the Incarnation and the Life, the value and importance of which it is impossible to estimate, Christ Himself always saw before Him the death which He must accomplish at Jerusalem, and the Apostles looked back on that death as the ransom which had

delivered the world from sin, and purchased them as a pure and holy possession for their Lord. So evident is this to any simple student of the New Testament, that they who intend to set aside the significance of His death would perhaps do well to avow that they are breaking with the witness and the opinion of the Apostles.

But before any one takes this very serious step, would it not be better to observe that, while it is on account of theories concerning the fact, and not on account of the fact itself, that many honest thinkers with righteous indignation have turned away from the whole subject of the objective sacrifice for sin, *the New Testament has no theory about the Atonement.* To one who has always been accustomed to read the Bible in the light of traditional interpretation and elaborate system, the notion that the New Testament presents no theory of the Atonement seems at a first glance incredible. Every familiar text has been quoted to support some theory or other until at last it seems to assert the theory which it has been quoted to support. That the advocates of each theory believe the text to be on their side, necessarily leads them to think that the advocates of a theory different from their own are perverse or dishonest in appealing to their proof-passages. Seldom does it strike the advocates of any theory that the cause of difference is not the wilfulness of heterodoxy, but simply the unobserved circumstance that the orthodoxy of the New Testament does not include a theory of the Atonement at all, and that, according to the penetrating judgment of Gregory Nazianzen, correctness of theory upon

the subject must not be demanded as an article of faith. Nor is the case fully stated when we deny that the New Testament contains a theory ; there is strong reason for suspecting that the several New Testament writers, if they had in their minds at all any connected system underlying their doctrine of salvation, differed, as widely as modern theologians, from one another in their forms of conceiving and expressing it. Not to mention that a writer like St. James was so little occupied with the thought which was the very centre of St. Paul's system, that in the course of a General Epistle he never refers to it at all ; our concise investigation of the main New Testament writings has suggested that the view of St. Peter was slightly different from the view of St. John, and that even in the writings which are called in a general way Pauline, there are many hints and suggestions which countenance widely divergent developments of the theme. It is no small cause of the unhappy divisions and rancours which disturb the Protestant churches that a tacit but unjustifiable presumption is always made at the outset of discussion that on the point in question the New Testament has a decided and consistent opinion, and the only object of study is to discover it. Many angry controversies would die away if we were only willing to recognize the many points on which the New Testament has not a formulated or even implied theory.

On the question of the Atonement, it is a curious fact that the language of the Apostles seems specially designed to wreck by anticipation the theories which have been constructed. A chance phrase, or a sig-

nificant silence, a sudden emphasis on a forgotten side of truth, or a broad impression produced by the general tenor of a book when the mind rises from the verbal details, will pierce like a sharp splinter of rock the hull of a newly-launched doctrine. This cannot be altogether accidental. If the scattered points will not fall on the line of a circle, or of an ellipse, or of a parabola, or of a hyperbola, it is fair to conclude that the design was to avoid the delineation of a conic section. The more firmly we believe in revelation, and in the inspiration of the New Testament writers, the more shall we be impressed by the absence of a constructive plan, and the more suspicious shall we be of a scheme which maintains its verisimilitude by twisting or ignoring one or more points in the Apostolic teaching.

Now it may be broadly stated that the subject of the Atonement appears in the New Testament as a vast and transcendental mystery, a truth revealed, but not explained. It rises like a range of mountains against the sky, recognized as a constant feature of the landscape, tenderly loved in its shifting beauties of sunshine and shadow, rain, and storm and snow, but never delved or quarried—with roots which strike into the inscrutable bowels of the earth, and summits which rise insurmountable into the azure heights of heaven. Men do not argue that the mountains are there; they lift up their eyes to the hills from which cometh their salvation, without any desire to curiously inquire into the formation and the stratification of those mighty bastions. That is the general attitude of the New Testament writers.

No theory will cover their thought on the Atonement. At the most they permit us to contemplate certain great landmarks of truth on the subject, which are reared, like lofty peaks, above the swimming vapour and the untraversed gorges.

These landmarks may be noted.

First of all, no writer ever loses sight of the fact that the manifestation of Christ to destroy the work of sin and to save men was from the beginning to the end the work of God Himself. Never do the Scriptures leave a crevice where the idea might lodge that the work of salvation was undertaken by Christ in order to overcome some reluctance or inability on the part of God. An opposition or a conflict even for a moment between the Father and the Son, a travail on the side of the Son of Man to propitiate God, or even to incline Him to pardon sin, would strike every Apostolic writer with horror. God Himself is in their view the Saviour of men. They never dared to forsake the express assertion of Christ Himself that He was one with the Father, and that so far from having to make God favourable to men, He was always engaged in expressing His Father's pardoning love and readiness to save. If a propitiation is made, God Himself is always spoken of as its author. Never is it said that He is propitiated; but He is always seen making the propitiation in Christ, which heathenism supposed that man had to make to God. If in one place[1] a promise is made that we shall be saved from the wrath, and if in many places the salutary truth is declared that the wrath of God rests

[1] Rom. v. 9.

upon sin and the perpetrators of sin, there is the utmost care shown in the New Testament to avoid the implication that the wrath is in God's breast and not in Christ's, or that Christ has come to pacify or avert His Father's anger. Never is it even hinted that this burning wrath of God, which is indeed but the complement of His Holiness, ever ceases to rage against sin and sinners, unless, by the means which His own love has devised, men are actually saved from sin. The Atonement of Christ does not arrest the thunderbolts of God so that they will pass harmlessly by, but rather in it "the wrath of God is revealed upon all unholiness and unrighteousness of men."[1] The Apostles, at any rate, never see in the Cross a new element coming in to withstand the anger of God, but rather an inward conflict and agony of God Himself expressing His wrath against sin combined with the purpose of removing it. The unfortunate speculations of Protestant Pietism, and the idea of a penal suffering in the innocent Son, satisfying the vindictive justice of the Father, so that the wrath, having flashed out against Christ on the Cross, no longer burns against sinful men, would evoke a unanimous outcry of indignation from the New Testament writers. To traduce the character of the Father, and to suppose that He could find any satisfaction in a process so essentially immoral, would in Apostolic circles have been a clear evidence that there was no witnessing Spirit in the heart prompting the trustful cry, "Abba, Father."

In proportion as it is avowedly difficult to construct

[1] Rom. i. 18.

a theory of the Atonement which does not suggest an opposition between the Father and the Son, it is necessary for reverent minds to steep themselves in this constantly recurring truth of the New Testament, that the reconciliation, in whatever it consists, proceeds from the Father and is carried out by the Father, through the Son, who is in perfect harmony with Him ; and if in one solitary passage, the *Lama Sabachthani* of the Cross, it appears that the process of the sacrifice involved a wrenching of the spirit of Christ from its consciousness of unity with God, it must be remembered that it was preceded by the trustful "Thy will, not Mine, be done," and was immediately followed by "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Nothing but the wilfulness of a rather callous theorizing could extract from this mysterious episode the radically misleading notion that the wrath of God rested on Christ.

There is *a second landmark* of the truth, which stands clearly out when the New Testament is treated as a whole ; however emphatic may be the statements about the death and the sacrifice of the Cross, the saving work of Christ is always conditioned by His nature, His being, or, speaking from a human standpoint, His character. This truth might easily be missed if our only sources for Christian teaching were the earlier epistles of St. Paul. It cannot be denied that in those doctrinal writings the matter is so presented as to give colour to a distorted notion, that "Christ after the flesh" can be disregarded in a view of the Atonement, as if the sacrifice of the Cross might have been offered just as well in Heaven apart

from any incarnation and previous human life. This one-sided view is entirely corrected even by St. Paul's own writings, taken as a whole, but all possibility of mistake is removed by the place which the Gospel story occupies in the record of revelation. There the purpose seems to be that we should not so much as look at the Cross, much less begin to speculate about the nature of the offering made upon it, until, with quiet and repeated meditation, we have become well acquainted with the Person who went to suffer there. We are detained in the circle of His disciples, listening to His moral precepts, and observing the manner of His life; we are forced to a consideration and appreciation of His mysterious personality, so human that He seems to be the man *teres atque rotundus*, and yet so intimately and so lucidly connected with God that to see Him is to see the Father; we are held, as it were, on the mountain of transfiguration, watching the light break through His fleshy tabernacle, and apprehending His relation with prophets and systems that went before; we are filled with a sense of the incongruity between Him and death, and are amazed with the anguish which sin awakes in His sensitive soul; above all, we are bathed in the strong light of His untiring love, until the Heavens seem stooping in tenderness over us; God Himself is melting with the passion to save us, reaching out hands of conciliation, inviting us to our Home and the Festal Board, and the wide joy of starry hosts; and only then, at last, are we led up to see the Son of Man crucified, to realize the storm of human sin breaking with pitiless force upon His

devoted head, and raging in the vast spaces of His holy being. Only as the idea of what He was, and whence He came has possessed the mind, and impressed even His judges and His murderers, are we permitted to consider what this passion might signify, and how so transcendent an offering might take away the sin of the world.

It is the weakness of all those religious methods which rest upon selected texts and mild anecdotage, that they make light of the atmosphere and the circumstance of the New Testament Redemption, and prevent men from following the sweep of events, which led up to the Cross, by feebly reiterating a compact theory, a juridical barter reckoning about the suffering that was there endured. When all just insistence has been laid upon the place of the Atonement in the New Testament, it is impossible not to see that modern Evangelicalism has given it a disproportionate place in its system. By the large tracts of the New Testament which it leaves unexplained, and by its forced attempts to subordinate every feature of Gospel or Epistle to its dominant doctrine, the message of Evangelicalism in its decline has proved to be a wholly inadequate exposition even of the Atonement itself.

But when we have duly recognized these two landmarks of the truth, that God Himself is the author of the propitiation, and that the Atonement is only to be understood in relation to the whole work and person of the Saviour, there remains still this *third landmark* of the New Testament teaching. The death of Christ, the actual offering of

Himself made on the Cross, whatever may be its precise significance, is regarded by the Apostles not only as the declaration, but as the ground, of the Divine pardon ; it is regarded also not only as an example, in following which we shall be delivered from sin, but as a mystical fact which has to be assimilated by faith, so that the believer can regard himself as dead to sin on the Cross, released from the burden of an inexorable and lifeless law, and raised to a new life of holiness. It is quite surprising, as the reader must have felt, to find with what a firm and unfaltering hand the several writers we have reviewed draw the lines of this conviction. The more we see to admire and to profit by in the life and teaching of Christ, the more we rejoice in the fact that our God is by His very nature a pardoning God, ready and eager to forgive His children ; the more impressive do we feel this occupation of the Apostles with the lone offering of Calvary, and the keener is our wonder that they abstain from such theories as have since been suggested, which connect the Atonement rather with the moral or exemplary qualities of the Person than with the objective efficacy of His death. Nor is our wonder lessened, as we observe in our investigation that the language in which they express their conviction of the fact, does not suffice to form, and generally decisively aims at destroying, any complete account of what actually took place.

Having noticed these three landmarks of the New Testament teaching on the subject, and the absence of any formulated theory, it may be worth while to rapidly survey the theories which were mentioned in the

beginning of this Essay, and to observe how, one after another, they fail to square with the Apostolic witness.

The view suggested by Irenæus and completed by Origen—the view that prevailed all through the Middle Ages—that the ransom paid by Christ on the Cross was a lawful price given to the devil to let the souls which belonged to him go free, is prohibited by the Scriptures, because no single passage rightly understood gives even a foothold for it. Again, the view which tries to simplify the transaction by a doctrine of substitution, maintaining that Christ died in the place of sinners, taking on Himself their punishment so that they can go unpunished, is shattered on all the salient points of the New Testament teaching. To begin with, the false idea that an innocent being can be punished, and still more that He can be punished instead of other persons who are guilty, is most scrupulously avoided in the language of the New Testament. Christ is "made sin for us," and He "bears our sins in His own body on the tree." But that He is punished is never said; still less is it said that on the ground of His punishment we are left unpunished. "By His stripe we are *healed*," not exempted from the punishment of sin. He takes away our sins, but never, in the New Testament language, bears the penalty of them. Further, the writers of the New Testament are curiously scrupulous against saying that Christ died in our stead; they always say only He died for us.[1]

[1] Notice especially how St. Paul renders the δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν of Matt. xx. 28, by the paraphrase ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, 1 Tim. ii. 6. This uniform use of ὑπερ, "on behalf of," and avoidance of ἀντί, "in place

And, most important of all, we have no right to force upon the Apostles the logical absurdities in which the substitutionary theory abounds. It has before been noticed how the emergence of this theory provoked the logical acumen of Socinus, and gave him his decided dialectical victory. For even a very simple person can see that if Christ died *in stead of* us, we ought not to die at all; whereas, if we interpret Christ's death as a physical death, even the devout believer does not escape that death, while if we affirm that the death which the believer escapes is the everlasting death, or the penalties of hell, that is precisely the death which Christ did not and could not die. But while the dialectical victory of Socinianism is so easy, it is only right to remind the victors that it is obtained only over an irrational theory of modern evangelicals and not over the New Testament, which knows nothing of the theory.

But if the very words of Scripture refute these rather crude conceptions, the general tone of the New Testament writers is equally unfavourable to such theories as were framed by Anselm and his followers, and always convicts of insufficiency those moral theories which found their first formal advocate in Abélard. For the Lord and His Apostles never draw any distinction between the honour and the love of God, as if the one, impaired by human sin, must be satisfied before the other can go out to

of," cannot be brushed aside with the remark that the wider term ὑπερ includes the narrower term ἀντί. If the Apostles had held the modern evangelical view, they would have used the narrower term. To refuse to be specific on such a point is to say that the specific interpretation is wrong.

pardon it. They looked on the Divine Being who dwells in light unapproachable with too much awe to apply their metaphysical divisions to His nature. They never conceived that His honour wanted satisfaction. But, blending his honour and his love together, they supposed that He yearned, like a mother deprived of her children's love, for the creatures who were alienated from Him by wicked works, so that the movement of redemption did not spring from a sensitive honour, which had to be repaired, but from a passion of love that needed satisfaction. The same dominant tendency of Apostolic thought separates itself from such a theory as Dr. Dale's. The Apostles did not conceive of an eternal law of righteousness either over against God, or immanent in Him; they never spoke, therefore, after the fashion of mediæval jurists, of a satisfaction being necessary to this law when it was violated. And the idea of God Himself making this reparation to the law which was practically identical with Himself, would have led the Apostles into a region which they never ventured to penetrate.[1] When they spoke of Christ offering up Himself to God, they were not concerned with such a metaphysical entity as this abstract law, and they did not dream that His sufferings healed the breach in the law; but they felt the throb of a Divine love which was seeking to win them to righteousness, and was ready to enter into the full experience of their sins, in order to create in them a

[1] Still less would they, with Grotius, treat the Cross as a spectacular example to impress men with the righteousness which thus inexorably demands satisfaction by the infliction of penalty.

new life which should be free from sin. For the warm and ineffably sweet idea of reconciliation—which is the New Testament word for atonement—they would, we may surmise, have hesitated to accept the cold and fine-spun notion of an abstract law which had to be satisfied, and which to that end became flesh, in order to suffer in itself the penalty of its own infraction. Even if the understanding could be satisfied by an excursus into the realm of theological metaphysics, St. Paul or St. John would hardly have entered it, for, to say the least, a fine web of mist is in that region spun over those motions and impulses which, in their opinion, constituted the saving power of the Cross.

It may be said that the Moral Theory would not be so repugnant to the feeling of the Apostles, and we noticed how in *Ephesians*, at any rate, there were certain hints which afforded a shadowy outline of such a doctrine as Abélard's. When the dominant thought of the New Testament, Love, is sounded for an explanation of its central doctrine, we may expect to get a clearer understanding than is to be obtained elsewhere. But the Moral Theory, at least as it has been hitherto explained, can be strained by no tenter-hooks to cover the thought and language of the Apostles. It was an example of Divine love, which is supposed to kindle ours, when Christ suffered on the Cross—so says this theory in one guise or another. But if that suffering had no essential relation to men's redemption, if it had no objective efficacy in securing a positive and beneficial result, it would cease to appeal to men as

an example of love. We should see no very convincing proof that a friend loved us in the fact that he subjected himself to a needless suffering; the demonstration of love lies in the conviction that the suffering was itself for our good. And the language of the New Testament which we have examined, though it does not forbid discussion in that direction, seems to demand our consideration and thought in another. The Cross is an exhibition of God's love certainly—yes, but the love consists in this, that it is a ransom paid to deliver us from sin, a great sacrifice, which purchases immediate pardon for the believer, and brings him into a condition of joyful reconciliation with God.

It is certainly very remarkable that the New Testament writings, being so few, so scattered and so unsystematic, should yet be so imperative in demanding a recognition of this one fact, and so innocently ruthless in shattering the attempts of human ingenuity to explain it.

Now the purpose of this essay would be served if it succeeded in effecting a radical distinction between the Atonement and the theories which have been devised to explain it, and if the reader were led to realize with a new conviction that the New Testament asserts and vindicates the fact, and yet discourages and refutes the theories. The writer would be well content if what he has written should lead a few minds to a fresh contemplation of that inexhaustible story and that unassailable fact which inspired the first preachers and Apostles of the Christian faith. But if this position, which will to some minds wear

the appearance of unsatisfactory vagueness, is to be intelligently and rationally maintained, there are certain considerations tending to justify it which must be steadily borne in mind. And these considerations may be summarised before our task is completed.

Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; He offered Himself to God in a sacrifice of obedience and love; and because of His relation to God on the one hand, and His assumed identity with men on the other, He was able by this sacrifice of Himself to reconcile man with God, and to ransom men from sin in such a way that whoever believes in Him, and by faith comes into a mystical participation of His death and resurrection, is saved from sin and admitted into a conscious sonship to God. This is the fact declared in the New Testament. It is a fact presented in a history, and verified by the personal experience of believers. It is in the strictest sense a fact of revelation, that is, from first to last it is the presentation of a transcendental world, the world of God's thought and action, which can only be known by revelation, and even when known may well defy our analysis or explanation. Thus we find that every attempt to dissect, discuss, and arrange the elements of the fact is frustrated. We find ourselves entangled in a web of metaphors, which are, and are felt to be, partial and imperfect modes of presenting the fact. We speak of sacrifice, but the analogy is very faint between it and the sacrifice of bulls and goats. We speak of blood, but the blood of the ancient holocausts affords merely a hint, no solution, of the mystical

term. We speak of ransom, but we cannot press the figure; for ransom does not imply a personal conqueror or slaveholder who receives a price, but simply refers to the abstract evil called lawlessness from which the believer in Christ is rescued. We speak of sins laid upon the Saviour, or of the Saviour being made sin; but the very words at once declare that they are figures of speech, because a sin is essentially an action which only exists in relation to the actor, so that there is no possibility in any literal sense of a man's sins being transferred to another, and if the Saviour was made sin for us we never dream of the natural interpretation of the expression, that He was in any way tainted by our sin. We find ourselves, to speak concisely, in a circle of ideas where language fails, and the images gathered from experience are inadequate to interpret or even to describe. There is the transcendent fact of a pardon that is purchased: there is the blessed experience of a new spiritual life received by accepting the pardon; but with the recognition of the fact, and the assimilation of its saving results, our account of it has practically to cease. We can illustrate it. We can gain constantly new and surprising views of it. We can discover its relation with one after another of the truths which make up the spiritual or even the physical life of man. It is a theme for endless meditation, admiration, and gratitude. But we can give no consistent *rationale* of it. Intrinsically it remains unexplained.

Now the question occurs, is there any occasion for wonder that the fact, being of the nature thus

described, should be incapable of explanation? Ought we not to find a reason for satisfaction in its very inscrutability? May we not rejoice in the fact, and practically surrender ourselves to its saving influence, with a solemn joy that it, like so many of our best possessions, does not abide our question, but is free?

> "We ask and ask—It smileth, and is still,
> Out-topping knowledge." [1]

Life and resurrection are facts which we may accept, but cannot explain. The Sin, which is the antithesis of life, and makes a redemption necessary, is unexplained in its nature and its origin; here it is, the dark companion of our days from earliest childhood, a shadow which will not vanish because we refuse it a name, or because we try to dismiss the theological opinions which, as we suppose, produced it. But we cannot define Sin. We cannot conceive how it came to exist. Unless there were a good and omnipotent God, sin would be meaningless. But if there be such a God, how comes it that He permitted the tree to grow

> "Whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe?"

If the story of Paradise were not obviously an allegory, hinting at the nature of sin rather than describing its origin, it would raise, and indeed taken in its unintended sense it has raised, more doubts and questions than it has ever settled.

But if Life and the New Life are truths which we

[1] The whole of Matthew Arnold's sonnet on Shakespeare is a not inapt illustration of the position.

have to accept unexplained, is there any occasion for surprise if spiritual life, and the resurrection of the soul are effected by a Divine process which defies our investigation? Is it not rather what we might expect that "as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit"? And if Sin itself, its origin and its nature, is essentially an unexplained factor in life, is it any wonder that the way of vanquishing and removing sin should be presented in a fact, a divine-human transaction which discourages all attempts to explain it? Whether the pardon of sin is, in the divine mind and nature, difficult or easy, it is impossible for us to say. What are the antecedent conditions of pardon, or by what process the result can be achieved or declared, we have no *à priori* materials for determining. We are entirely out of our depth in any discussion of the subject. But the fact of the Gospel, long foretold, historically prepared, realized historically and recorded in the New Testament for all time, is God's way of declaring that He does pardon sin, and His way of actually delivering men from it. And if our records leave us in no question that the Saviour, sent of God, Himself attached a unique importance to His death, and His chosen Apostles consistently declared His death as the ground of human redemption, we can only accept this revelation of the unknown as it is given to us, and conclude that what did happen by God's ordinance was in God's judgment essential to produce the admitted result.

Now it is from this point of view that an answer suggests itself to a not uncommon demur. Some people say, "We see no need for an Atonement, if we repent of our sins; our Heavenly Father will forgive us our sins, and we can accept His pardon on the simple ground of His nature." But if the course of our argument is valid, it will be necessary to say in reply to such a contention, "If *you* see no need for an Atonement evidently God does, and His final revelation to men is precisely this fact of Atonement accomplished as the ground of your salvation: and, if He has actually in history made this revelation, is it possible for you to pass it by and even to deny it, taking your stand upon the ground of His nature? The contention of Christianity is that the facts we have had before us are precisely the revelation of God's nature, which is otherwise unknown; and at the centre of those facts is that mysterious sacrifice of Christ which God Himself appointed as a propitiation to show His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime." [1]

And still one other consideration remains, which may incline thoughtful men to grasp and to proclaim the fact of the Atonement, even if confessedly they can furnish no satisfactory theory of it. It is this: The history of the Church furnishes repeated evidence that the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, in the way which we have noted throughout this Essay, has been the occasion and means of all decisive extension and rapid establishment of the kingdom. Sometimes, as in the Apostolic days

[1] Rom. iii. 25.

themselves, this preaching (*κήρυγμα*) was unencumbered with a theory. Sometimes a theory has been, at any rate for a time, intellectually satisfying, as in the early days of the Reformation. But often the theory has been crude and unintelligent, calculated to suggest questions rather than to commend the fact proclaimed. And yet where the fact has been faithfully and believingly preached, there have been the signs following. In a little book, for instance, published a few years ago, under the title of *Gospel Ethnology*,[1] the author shows by a careful examination of missionary effort during the last 170 years, that in all countries and among all races of men the penetrating point by which Christian truth and civilization have pierced the prejudice and callousness of heathenism, has been the story of the Cross, the sufferings of the sinless Saviour proclaimed to men as the means of their pardon and acceptance with God. And though there is evidence of much religious life and philanthropic effort existing apart from this particular truth, though there is much interesting and instructive preaching which never refers to the Atonement except in its so-called moral aspect, or in an interpretation which practically ignores the special significance of the death,—it is an open question deserving of a careful consideration whether sinful men are changed, whether heathen societies are regenerated, whether any church is buoyantly successful in the reclamation of the lost and the rebellious, when from one cause or another

[1] *Gospel Ethnology*, by S. R. Pattison, Religious Tract Society.

this fact of Atonement sinks into a subordinate and inconsiderable place? The decay which Christian men deplore in many churches may frequently be traced to a silence upon the subject of Christ Crucified, or a certain apologetic hesitancy in the proclamation of the fact, owing to a deep dissatisfaction, and even active disgust, with the view of atonement to which the fact has been habitually attached. If the view taken by this Essay be correct, a new era will dawn when we not only turn from the attempted explanations, but cease to attempt explanations of our own, and seek to present in all its orderly sequence and all its intrinsic power, the great truth of revelation, the Son of God manifested in the flesh to take away sins, moving with unflinching purpose to His great foreseen sacrifice, and risen from the dead, the work finished and the victory achieved, to give repentance and remission of sins to all who believe.

VI.

PRAYER, IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

HENRY ARNOLD THOMAS.

Prayer, in Theory and Practice.

THAT contrast between the Ideal and the Actual which often so painfully impresses us, is, perhaps, never more apparent than when we come to make a comparison between the theory and the practice of prayer. In theory, prayer is a thing sacred and glorious beyond the power of words to describe. No privilege possible to men is worthy to be put by the side of the privilege of communion with God. No joy can thrill the heart like the joy of the man who knows that he is in the presence of the Creator and Ruler of all, and is conscious that his appeal is heard. No peace can be so profound or so holy as the peace which possesses the minds of those who have entered into the meaning of this mystery, and, by an act of faith or in a moment of vision, have claimed for themselves the unspeakable blessing which it brings. It is surely impossible to say too much of the glory and honour with which that man is crowned, of the grace, the power, the tranquillity, and the gladness, which have become his portion, who has learned how to pray. That must be acknowledged by all who have ever had any religious instinct or aspiration.

And yet, when we consider the practice of men,

and begin to inquire into their actual experience, we are apt to find that prayer does not by any means appear to be in reality what it is in theory. We find that it is approached as a duty rather than valued as a privilege, and often as a duty not of the most attractive kind. Men ought to pray, and they pray, or try to pray, sometimes with poor success, because they ought. But the time and the strength which are given to the work are given, if the truth must be confessed, but grudgingly. The complaint has become common in our churches that the meeting for prayer is scantily attended, and that, on the whole, small interest is taken in it. The charm of music may give to the service an attractiveness in the eyes of some, and sermons or addresses may serve to commend it, or to make it endurable, to others. But the mere praying would seem to have little fascination for many minds. There is little beauty in it that men should desire it, little sacredness in it that it should be held in honour. It is counted almost a strange thing that a gentleman, and a man of education, and resources, should frequent prayer-meetings. "How odd," it is said, "that a man like that should go to such places, when there must be so many things to interest and occupy his thoughts, and claim his attention." That a feeling like this, of distaste and almost of quiet scorn for the prayer-meeting, prevails in many quarters will scarcely be disputed.

And though we must speak with greater reserve of private prayer, seeing that we know little of the habits of men in this respect, yet there are not

wanting signs or testimonies that the prayers which are made in the closet to the Father, which seeth in secret, are very far indeed from being what they might be expected to be, or from bringing to those who offer them what they might be expected to bring.

And thus it is, according to the admission which they will sometimes sorrowfully make, with many who could not justly be described as unspiritual or careless men. It is not to be wondered at that those who have in them no religious life, or next to none, those who are quite immersed in earthly things, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure, lovers of themselves alone, should find prayer, whether in public or private, to be irksome or distasteful, unless accompanied by such displays or performances as are fitted to allure the sense, or please the fancy, or gratify the intellect. That can surprise nobody. But it is to the good, and the devout, that prayer seems often to bring so little strength and help, and to whom it has such small significance. There are men who want to pray, but cannot pray, or cannot pray as they would. They thirst after God, like the Psalmist whose anguished cry from the hill Mizar echoes still in the desolate hearts of those who ask, in their loneliness and their despair, when they shall come and appear before the living God. Like Job, they "would that they might find Him, that they might come even unto His seat." They want to pray, but they cannot. They find the effort a hopeless effort, the search a vain search. In their experience the promise of Christ appears to

fail of fulfilment. They ask, but do not receive. They seek, but do not find. They knock, but the door is not opened to them. Such words as they utter are spoken, as it were, into the air and lost. They speak, but there is a chilling silence. No whisper comes to them from other worlds. No invisible hand is laid upon their troubled spirits. No glory dawns upon their wistful eyes. All is darkness. All is stillness. They are alone, for no Father is with them. They are orphans in an empty Universe. It is not so, but so it seems, and they rise from their knees with a bitter sense of disappointment and failure. They have tried to pray, and they have not prayed. They have done nothing but repeat empty words to which there has been no response. If prayer is a privilege, they have not known how to use the privilege. If it brings joy and peace, the joy and peace have not been theirs.

This is, of course, no new thing. It has not been in our own day only that men with the instinct and the heart to pray, have found the practice of prayer to be so full of difficulty. But there are two tendencies of the present age which have served to aggravate the difficulty. One is that tendency towards free and widespread speculation in the region of religious truth which is so characteristic of our time. The modern mind has made it its business to challenge every dogma, and inquire into the foundations of all belief. This is a tendency of which we have no right to complain, and, indeed, we are not likely to be in any mood to complain of it. In the main it is

good, and good must come out of it in the end. But its dangers are obvious. When the intellect is so busy in the endeavour to find out what is the truth about God and about man, when it is so incessantly doubting, and probing, and sifting, and analyzing, and setting out in order its arguments, and weighing them with anxious care; when these processes of investigation or reasoning are in operation, it must always be difficult to pray.

Coleridge is reported to have said that the great mass of learned men are incapable of prayer. Probably he meant that the habit of approaching all things in a spirit of inquiry, or criticism, had a way of hiding from the wise and prudent those truths which it has pleased God to reveal to babes. And it is evident that this must be so. A certain simplicity of soul, a childlikeness of spirit such as Christ commended, would seem to be essential to the exercise of the prayer that brings strength and peace. And it can scarcely be easy, though it would certainly be going too far to say that it is impossible, for the man whose mind has been trained by processes of inquiry of a searching and scientific character, and who has made himself familiar with the history of doctrine and all the controversies of the schools, to humble himself and become as a little child in the presence of those deepest truths, those things unseen and eternal, which cannot be grasped by the force of the understanding alone, but must be felt in the heart, attested by the conscience, and proved by acts of obedience. No doubt the remark may be made that the majority of men are not learned, and are not un-

duly and dangerously active in the domain over which the logical understanding presides. The remark is a just one, and it may be conceded that there are multitudes who find it hard to pray, whose difficulties are in no way traceable to the spirit of free and fearless inquiry which is abroad. But the air is so much impregnated with this spirit of speculation that most men must be in some degree affected by it, even though they may not be aware of the influence under which they have been brought. Guiltless of all learning, and perhaps dull in intellect, they will yet be so far drawn into the prevailing current as to become bewildered in mind, and incapable of that simplicity of religious trust, and that unwavering directness of the consciousness of God which characterized a former age.

There is a second tendency of the time, of quite a different nature, which also is in danger of increasing the difficulty of cultivating and maintaining the habit of prayer. It is the tendency so common to-day in the churches, and beyond their borders, to all kinds of practical service. It is not only speculation which is in the air. The moral atmosphere is charged in equal measure with the spirit of philanthropy. If the minds of men are busy and restless, so also are their hands. The call everywhere is a call to work. We have been deeply moved by the spectacle of the countless sorrows of mankind. We have gone forth, like Moses, to see the burdens under which our brethren are groaning; and we have felt that our first concern must be to allay these sorrows, to remove these burdens. And so the time, to-day,

is all too short for those who would heal the sick, or comfort the distressed, or instruct the ignorant. All the long day must be spent in sight of the trouble, and amid the noise of the strife of the world.

This, again, is a tendency with which we should be ill-disposed to quarrel. But how natural it is that eager-hearted men and women, with compassionate instincts within them which call for expression, should be drawn away too hurriedly sometimes from the secret place of prayer, where they find themselves so little at ease, by the example and pressure of the great crowd which is bent on relieving the obvious necessities of mankind, and doing such solid service as may take its place of honour in the world of visible things. How should they remain there in solitude, praying, or trying to pray, when the world is waiting for them, when cruel wrongs are calling loudly for redress, when cries of human anguish rend the air, when justice is outraged, and the spirit of mercy is continually being grieved! How should they keep the door shut upon those scenes of misery and shame, and pray, while the precious moments in which so much service might be done are being lost! It is not a strange thing that they should be impatient of the brief hours which may seem to be devoted only to the cultivation of their own piety, or the indulgence of their own spiritual emotion. They hear the sound of the battle, and they want to be in the midst of it. What time is there for prayer in a world like this? They have no leisure, no heart, to

pray. It must be work, work, work, for ever. They will toil on, and struggle on, till they drop exhausted.

Thus these two tendencies of the age, the habit of speculation on the one hand, and the zeal for practical effort on the other, both tend somewhat to discourage that temper of the mind which is congenial to the exercise of prayer; and an inquiry into the nature of the difficulties by which those are beset who feel that prayer is a duty, or wish to make it a delight, would therefore seem to have a special timeliness.

What, then, are these difficulties? Before proceeding to the discussion of that question, it will be wise to consider what we are to understand by prayer. How is it to be defined? What do we do when we pray? Our definition must neither be too narrow, nor too wide. Sometimes to pray means simply to ask. But there may be much true prayer, in the sense in which it is best for our present purpose to understand the word, where there is no petition. Prayer is any kind of utterance of the soul towards God. Indeed, it is too much to demand that there should be anything that can fitly be described as utterance. For no word need be spoken. No outward sign need be given. It is not even essential that any distinct thought or hope should shape itself in the mind. "Prayer is the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear." But there may be prayer without even the sigh, the tear. Prayer in its simplest essence is the turning of the soul towards God. It is that act by which the

human spirit seeks to come into contact with the Divine Spirit. It is the thinking, not about God, but towards God, though the movement of the mind may scarcely define itself even as a thought.

No complaint can be made of this definition that it is not a wide one. But care must be taken not to widen it still further. And this some may be tempted to do. "*Laborare est orare*," says the ancient adage. But "to labour" is not "to pray,"—not of necessity. For much work may be done, and done nobly and from pure motives, in the service of God and of men, though there may be no thought or consciousness of God at all in the mind of the man who does it. He is absorbed in his work. He is maturing his plans. He is watching the issue of his experiments. He is wholly intent on that which is passing beneath his eyes. And this is good, and often may be essential to success, but it is not what we mean by prayer. Until the soul of the man is uplifted towards God, he has not begun to pray. The distinction must be preserved between saying and doing. Saying—that is, the speech of the soul, whether the lips move or not—is prayer. Doing is not prayer, unless, indeed, the thing done be done explicitly and consciously, as a sign of love or an act of praise, or is regarded by the man who does it as the distinct and deliberate expression of some other feeling which he has towards God. Prayer does not necessarily involve anything more than the direct, conscious uplifting of the soul towards God, but it always does involve that.

This being our definition of prayer, it may be proper at this point to say a word by way of meeting the inquiry of those who ask what need there is for men to spend much time in such an exercise. Perhaps it is not necessary to answer such an inquiry at any length. Certainly, it ought not to be necessary. And yet what do we find? We find a feeling to be not uncommon, even among those whose excellence of character and devotion to duty we should be sorry to dispute, that it does not matter very greatly whether a man prays much, or whether he prays at all. The thing is, to be honest, to be useful, to be kind. That, according to the theory of many, is the essential thing, and the only essential thing. God gives us our work to do, and He would have us do it, but He can care little about our talking to Him of our work, or of anything else. Actions speak louder than words. Let it be enough for us to do what is right. Devoutness is very well, but some men are devout by nature and others are not. It is a matter of taste or of temperament. What concerns us all is to be good men, and to live good lives. That is what some seem to regard as a common sense view of the matter, which ought to commend itself to all practical men.

But if one reflects at all, how little there appears to be to commend it! How much there is to be said on the other side! Does it matter little whether we pray or not? But how great the loss is to those who never pray! How much they miss of the purest joy of life, how much of the richest consolation which

Heaven affords! One would think, apart from all considerations of duty and of what may be fitting, that the very appeal to God, if there is any, even the faintest assurance that He hears, would bring infinite satisfaction, and a divine rest to the soul. When a man stands in the presence of what is beautiful in nature, a mountain with its crown of snow, or a wayside flower bright with the dew of the morning, when he is overwhelmed with the immensity of the universe as he looks up to the frosty skies, when he walks alone in the darkness and feels the breath of the night air upon his cheek, and hears its sound among the branches, and is touched with a sense of the mysteries of life and death—to realize then in his littleness and loneliness, and the extremity of his human weakness, and his vague dread of he knows not what, that the Creator of all those worlds beyond worlds, the Being of Beings who is at the source of everything, is One to Whom he may betake himself, to Whom he may lift up his heart, to Whom he may speak. Is not that a wonderful possibility? a possibility the very thought of which should serve to bring tranquillity, and relief, and a blissful sense of companionship, and security. Or, in those wistful moods when the heart aches and hungers at the remembrance of the dead, and there is the bitter longing that most men know so well to discover where and what they be, and to come near to them, if but for a moment, how much it should be worth then to human spirits, perplexed and baffled, to turn to Him who has all things in His keeping, and under His control, and to Whom all men are alive! What a mistake to

question whether it matters though men never pray, so long as they do their duty. The consideration of what is essential to our own deepest happiness should furnish answer sufficient to such an inquiry. But there are other things to consider besides our own happiness. There is the consideration of what is seemly, of what is demanded of us by the very relationship in which we stand towards God. For if God be, in any deep and real sense, the Father of the spirits of men, then it would appear to be, to say the least, a strange and unnatural thing that any man should spend his days, and do his work without ever holding any communion with Him. What can be said of the son who lives at home with his father, but never has a word to say to him, who does his duty, and takes his pleasure, as though there were no other being in the house? That would scarcely be a natural state of things. And not less, but rather more, is it an unnatural state of things when men believe in God, and believe in His Fatherhood, and believe in His presence, and yet all their life long are silent towards Him. There is something shocking, something that ought to be felt to be unbearable, in that silence. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry, 'Abba, Father.'" That cry of "Father" is the spontaneous, the inevitable, cry of the man to whom that spirit has come, and who has been awakened by its quickening breath.

And there is yet more to be said. If the plea is urged that the main thing is that we should do our life's work, and do it honestly, and that there is no

need that we should be speaking much about it even to God Himself, may not the reply be made that there is need of help in order that that work may be effectually and faithfully done, and of that help which comes alone from above, and which every true instinct of the heart, as well as God's own revelation in His word, would lead us to ask for? Further, it happens to most men, and not least to those who are most anxious to do their work well, that often they are conscious of doing it very badly, and what will trouble them still more, of being themselves not altogether faithful towards Him in whose Name, and in obedience to Whose Will, it is being done. Are they never to speak of their sorrow? Are they never to acknowledge their infirmity and their sin? Is the knowledge of these melancholy failures to be hidden for ever in their own hearts? Or, again, if, having sought help, they have received it, or if, having acknowledged their weakness or folly, they have been forgiven, is there, then, to be no word of gratitude, no song of praise, for these benefits, to say nothing of countless other benefits which have come to them unasked?

There should be no need to urge considerations like these. Perhaps there is no need. And yet the signs that are amongst us that what is described as devoutness is held to be of little moment so long as men are living good and useful lives, surely suggest the timeliness of the question whether a life wanting in the element of prayer, can be a good and useful life in any deep sense of the words.

Understanding, then, that prayer is any kind of

converse of the soul with God, and assuming that it is an essential element in the highest life, we have to ask what it is that makes it difficult, and how the difficulties may be met and overcome.

We shall first have to consider two initial difficulties of a general kind, connected not with any particular form that prayer may assume, such, for instance, as intercession for others, or petition for temporal benefits, but with the act itself of communion with the Unseen.

The two difficulties are these: first, there is the want of definiteness in the conception of the Being to whom we would speak; and, secondly, there is the want of accessibility to that Being.

First, there is the want of definiteness in the conception of God. We would speak to God. To God! But who is God? What is He? It is something vague and vast, something that cannot be grasped by the intellect, that cannot be pictured by the imagination, a name only, an abstraction, a generalization, an idea without form or shape, that is before us when we kneel down and try to pray. "What a dim shadow," wrote the late Professor Maurice, a man who knew how to pray, one would suppose, as well as most, "what a dim shadow, thrown, it would seem, from our own minds, has often been before us when we were kneeling before the Majesty of Heaven." Some rare and happy souls may scarcely understand what Mr. Maurice meant when he alluded to that experience; but many know, well enough. Speaking to God is not to them like speaking to some human friend. There is no bodily form in which the

Eternal Spirit clothes Himself, no distinct personality of which they are conscious, no "sweet human hand and lips and eye" by which the Being with whom they would speak reveals Himself to their gaze.

They are told that God is an indestructible and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, and they assent to the proposition; but such a definition little helps them to pray. His Name, they are assured, is a Name for a "stream of tendency that makes for righteousness." But who can open his heart to a stream of tendency? They learned in their childhood that God was a "Spirit, Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable in His Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth," and they have never doubted it; but it is hard to talk freely to a collection of attributes. They are assured that God is a Father. That is something better worth knowing; but it does not suffice. A Father! But what sort of a Father? It is a great and beautiful Name, but the Name alone is not enough to bring them in trust and love to His knees. There are fathers and fathers. Jupiter also was the "father." It is not enough for us simply to know that God is a Father. We need some one to "show us the Father" before we can be content. Everywhere man has been craving thus for definiteness in his conception of Deity.

Can this initial difficulty be overcome? Can we get a clear enough conception of God to enable us to speak to Him with a satisfaction like that which we feel when we speak to our human friends? The

answer is to be found in Christ's reply to Philip's question: "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." It is often said that Christ came to declare to men that God was their Father. But much more than that is the truth. He came to unveil the brightness of that Father's face, to reveal, and prove, the boundless love and pity that were in the Father's heart. By all that He did among men, and by all that He suffered, and by all that He was, which was more than anything He did or suffered, by all His life, His love, His sorrow, His patience, His compassion, His Personality, so winning, so distinct, so human, He gave to the world a conception of God which should satisfy the soul's deepest need for what is concrete and definite, and surely will satisfy it when the meaning and purpose of the Incarnation are fully apprehended. For though this is not all that the Incarnation means, it is one of its meanings. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." There, in Jesus, is shining the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. There, in that Face, in that Life, the Unknown is revealed to mortal vision, the Eternal is interpreted and defined. There, the Divine so limits itself as to become the object of human love and trust. We are far from saying that there is nothing in God which does not appear in the character of Jesus. To say that were presumption and folly. But we do say that we can only form a definite conception of the Divine, as it manifests itself in the Human, and that the Personality of Jesus is the Human, the Man, in

the mysterious and unfathomable nature of God; that the aspect of God by which we, with our limited faculties, may behold Him is the revelation of Himself which He has given in One who was made in fashion as we are. And we say that prayer need never be a vague aspiration after the Infinite, or a philosophic meditation on a soulless energy, or a blind tendency, if the doctrine of the Incarnation has become to us a fact and a reality. If God was in Jesus, we cannot pretend that we do not know what God is like. We can apprehend, if we cannot comprehend, Him. Much of any father's life and work must be hidden from the little child. But the child knows one side, at least, of that strange and complex being, his father. He knows enough to be at home and happy in his father's company. And the child of God knows enough to be at home and happy in the company of his Heavenly Father if Jesus is to him that Father's Face, His Smile, His Word. This is the bearing of the doctrine of the Incarnation on the subject of prayer.

Those who take such a view will have no difficulty in meeting a complaint, not infrequently heard, that by addressing our prayers to Jesus we are putting Him in the place of the Father. That is not at all what we are doing. We are not putting Jesus in the place of God, but we are accepting Him as the interpretation of God, which is quite another thing. We are adoring the Eternal Love as we see it there defining itself, and coming home to our hearts in a shape we can understand. We are bowing before the Holiness of Heaven, as it ceases to be a name

or an idea, and embodies itself in the form and image of a man. We are speaking to that in God with which He has made us familiar, and by which we believe it to be His will that we should conceive of Him. When we look into the face through which the soul of some earthly friend is appealing to us, we are not putting the yearning love which is in the eyes, the words of grace upon the lips, the sweetness of the whole expression, in the place of the soul. These are rather the outward and visible signs by which the soul reveals itself, and holds communion with us. We look beyond that which we can see, to that which we cannot see. And the works and ways of Jesus as we picture them to ourselves, His words of truth and tenderness, as we listen to them in imagination, these are the visible and audible signs by which that great Heart, who is at the centre of the Universe, is speaking to our poor human hearts. So far, then, from forsaking or dishonouring the Father when we turn in prayer and love to Jesus, we are drawing near to the Father in the truest and in His own appointed way.

And thus it is suggested to us how we may get practical help when we feel, as Maurice expressed it, that it is but a dim shadow that is before our minds when we try to pray. If we wish to give distinctness to our thought of some friend, we recall his look, his words, his tone, his manner, on some particular occasion when our attention chanced to be fixed upon him, or our love was deeply stirred. By so doing, his image becomes much clearer to us than when we reflect only in a general way on the peculiar features

of his character. There are men whom we always picture to ourselves as we saw them at some one hour, or some one moment, of their history, if we wish to bring them, as they truly are, distinctly and vividly before the eye of the mind. The words that then fell from their lips, the things which we then saw them to be doing, are to us, as they come back to our memory, the clearest, sharpest, portraiture of themselves. Their very soul was in those words, those deeds, in the part they played, so noble, so moving, at that memorable hour. We think of them as they then stood revealed to us, if we want to discern them most truly and understand them most perfectly in their essential nature. So if any would have his conception of God so narrowed and limited as to make it very sharp and clear, what can he do better than put himself, in imagination, in the presence of Jesus on one of those occasions, of which so many are described in the Gospel records, when the majesty, or the grace, or the gentleness of Jesus is conspicuously apparent? He will not realize best the vastness of God when he does that, but he will see something that is of God, and that is God, with marvellous distinctness. All nature is often best represented to us, and becomes most fair and lovable, when we turn away from the bewildering immensity of creation with its innumerable modes of existence, and look into the heart of some little flower, exquisite in the delicacy of its form and the purity of its colour. And God may be best represented to us when we cease from the abstractions of theology which discusses His attributes, or from the contem-

plation of the universe which is His living garment, and gaze upon the brightness of His face as it shines upon us in the deeds or the words of Jesus, in His earthly ministry of healing and deliverance. A mediæval writer of singular saintliness and nobility of character, has left it on record how, often, when it seemed impossible to meet with his Lord as he saw Him with bodily eyes in the crucifix, he would seek Him with the eyes of the soul by "thinking and remembering," and how thus thinking and remembering, the heart would grow warm with the glow of love, and the eyes would be wet with tears. By thinking of Jesus, and remembering in detail the story of His life, His image may be found to grow wonderfully clear, and beholding Him in His beauty, we shall behold also, and that not as a dim shadow, that Eternal Father whose glory He interprets, and whose heart He reveals. And so our hearts, too, shall grow warm, and our eyes wet with tears.

II. But there is a second difficulty, of an initial and general character, which men feel when they try to pray. It is the want of accessibility to God.

The Person of Jesus as it is portrayed in the Gospels is no doubt very distinct, and if God is manifest in Jesus, there can be no just ground for complaint that we do not know what God is like. But then the question comes, How can we get near to Him, near enough to speak, near enough to have consciousness of anything like Communion? That human life of Jesus is remote from us in time, and is becoming ever more and more remote as years roll on, and century succeeds to century. And the

Person of Jesus! Where is it? Who can say? At the right hand of God? But where is that? How can we draw near to Him? We cannot go back, except by a flight of imagination, through all these centuries that have come and gone since He dwelt amongst us. We cannot ascend, except by a flight of imagination still more hazardous, into that heaven of heavens wherein He may be enthroned in glory, lost to us in inaccessible light. Such is the troubled cry of many hearts. It is to them as when a friend has died. There is no want of distinctness in the image which they have in their minds of that vanished friend. They remember every feature, every tone.

> "The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
> Into his study of imagination,
> And every lovely organ of her life
> Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,
> More moving-delicate, and full of life,
> Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
> Than when she lived indeed."

Thus Shakespeare describes the vividness with which the dead are apprehended by the inward eye. But acknowledging that, how many, being bereft, are filled with sorrow and desolation because, clear as the inward vision is, there is no intercourse, no sense of contact. They and their dead have been placed so far apart that they cannot "hear each other speak." That is the misery of it.

And thus it may be with some who do not doubt that Jesus is the interpretation of God, but who feel that He is so far away as to make all contact and

communion impossible. If He were here again, if He could walk with them across the fields, or join the social meal, or sit with them by the fireside, they could speak. Prayer, in the sense of intercourse, would then be a reality indeed. But how can they commune with One who lived nineteen centuries ago, or lives to-day in some far-off Heaven? It is difficult. It seems to be impossible.

Where is help to be found for those who are in perplexity like this? It is to be found in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For as it is the doctrine of the Incarnation which teaches us how we may acquire a definite conception of God, and may understand what He is, so it is the doctrine of the Spirit which teaches us how we may know Him whose character is thus revealed to us, to be a God at hand, and not a God afar off.

It was this that Jesus taught His disciples on that same night when He told them that those who had seen Him had seen the Father. Much was said during those sacred hours of the Spirit Who was to come when Jesus Himself should be seen no more. Why did He speak thus of that Spirit? It is reasonable to think that it was, in the main, a practical purpose which He had in view. He was about to leave His disciples, and they were miserable at the thought of losing Him. They would be like orphans in a desolate world if He were gone. The sun would have vanished out of their sky. And reading their thoughts, He tried to reassure them. They were not to be troubled or afraid. It would not be as they were fearing. For, in the first

place, if He were leaving them, it was only that He might make ready for them in a House in which there would be ample room for them, as well as for Him. And, next, they were to understand that, though He might leave them for a little while, He would come again in another Form, and dwell with them, and within them, in fellowship yet dearer and more intimate than anything they had known in the happy days which now were coming to an end. The Spirit who was of Himself, and Who was Himself, should be their abiding Guest. Unseen by any mortal eye, He yet would ever be by their side and nearer than by their side, a Helper and a Comforter whose home should be in the most secret chamber of their being. If any man would be obedient, Jesus would come, and the Father would come, and take up their abode with that man. Why should they be disconsolate? They would never be left alone. The Father would be with them. The Son would be with them, Who, as their Human Friend and Lord, had interpreted the Father. Father and Son would be with them in the presence of that Spirit who could never be separated from either. Thus it was the purpose of Jesus to strengthen the hearts of His sorrowful and trembling disciples on the eve of His departure. He was not lecturing to them on the doctrine of the Trinity. Surely He had no wish to puzzle their minds, distracted enough already, by disquisitions on the nature and functions of the Three Persons in the Godhead. It was no time for abstruse theologies. What He desired was rather to make it clear to them

that they were not going to be left in the world alone. This was the thought that, by one phrase and another, He would fix firmly in their hearts.

And they believed in His promise, and found, in after days, that it was amply fulfilled. Beset by foes, and confronted with what seemed to be impossible tasks, they felt that they were not forsaken. They knew that He was with them, as He had said, that He was leading them still, and loving them still, and helping them continually with a grace that was ever sufficient for their need. They had the Spirit, and that Spirit was none other than their Lord whose presence with them now was more constant, and whose companionship was closer, than in those years of familiar intercourse, which were indeed sweet to recall, but which they had no occasion to regret. And so it has been also in every age with those who have believed through their word.

But the question may be put whether this consciousness of the Spirit of Christ is anything more than a vague apprehension of some supernatural power. If that same Spirit who was behind all that men saw or heard in Jesus is with us, and even within us, to-day, why does He not reveal Himself? Why does He not speak? The reply is, that He does reveal Himself, that He does speak, whenever there is the faith that can interpret the sound of His voice, or the quickness of discernment that can recognize the pressure of His hand. Even to-day the heart of the disciple burns within him, and he has no suspicion at the time of the cause of that strange emotion. The thought does not come to Him that "it is the

Lord." It is a melancholy thing that men should be slow to read the meaning of the most significant facts. They tell us that they cry after the living God in the hunger of their hearts, and that it is of no use. There comes no answering voice. But they do not consider that He is there, and that He is speaking in that very instinct of their nature which prompts them thus to cry, and that they would never concern themselves to seek His face if He had not first spoken to them, and bidden them to seek it. Is God of any account to me at all? It is because His spirit is pleading within me. Is there in me any sorrow for sin, or sense of shame, or quickening of holy desire? It is that Spirit which breathed through all the sinless life of Jesus that is pointing out the evil, and calling me to better things. Am I touched at all by any feeling of love, or of pity, for men around me in their manifold distresses? It is the very Lord Himself who is moving the depths of my heart. Is God so far away? He is wonderfully near. The Word became Flesh. The Word has also become Spirit. And that Spirit is at one with mine. "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or than feet." Far away? Nay, but still at work within, unless all goodness, and all hope of goodness, and all true love, and all yearning after love, are gone from me utterly and for ever. For these impulses and affections, these aspirations and regrets, these prickings of an uneasy conscience, and stirrings of a heart that cannot rest, are the signs of God's presence, and the language by which He speaks. When they are present with me, He is present. I see His glory in the face of

Jesus Christ, but the movement of His Spirit within me is the very touch of His finger.

Now if God be thus defined and interpreted in Jesus Christ, and if He comes so near to man in the Spirit, it might be supposed that prayer, to all who accept the doctrine of the Incarnation and of the Holy Ghost, would necessarily be an easy thing, involving no sort of labour or strife. No doubt, if we imagined that God was unwilling to give to us what is good, or was like those tardy benefactors known among men who need to be applied to many times and with much insistence before their attention can be gained and their service secured—if we thus conceived of God we might understand how prayer should sometimes mean hard work, and even strenuous conflict. But it is impossible for us with the New Testament in our hands thus to conceive of God. Are we not taught that He knows what things we need before we ask, and that we are not the more likely to be heard for our much speaking? Are we not encouraged to look up to Him as the Heavenly Father who is much more likely to give us good things when we ask than the earthly father is to give good things to his children? But these things being so, it might be supposed that it would be the easiest thing in the world to pray, at least, for those who accept the New Testament teaching and who have any disposition to pray. And yet it often seems to be so very difficult, even to such persons. It is not, indeed, difficult to all men, or not to all men in all moods. There are those to whom at certain times, and under certain happy conditions, prayer is as sim-

ple and as natural as the unconstrained and pleasant talk that a man may have with his intimate friend. But to others, and sometimes to these same men in other circumstances, or other frames of mind, it is like a hard task. It means effort and strain; it is not easy at all.

Now what is the meaning of this? Wherein does the effort, of which it may be presumed most are conscious, consist? Why should it be necessary? These are questions of much practical interest that invite our consideration.

The first thing to be said is, that it is not in the momentary uplifting of the soul to God which we have taken to constitute the very essence of prayer, that the need for effort appears, so much as in that sustained intercourse with Him which must be generally acknowledged to be a duty, and which, it will be felt, ought to be a source of deepest pleasure. It is prayer in this sense, prayer which involves an interview with God, if the term may be pardoned, which frail man often finds to be so hard. But why is it hard? If the mere cry of the soul for the Unseen is so natural and spontaneous, what is there to hinder the quiet setting out in order of our thoughts, or the simple statement of our needs in His presence?

I. One simple answer is that the very act of controlling the thoughts, of composing and concentrating the mind, implies often a strenuous effort of the will. It is one of the illusions with which it is common for men to flatter themselves that they are masters and rulers of their own minds. They fancy

they can think about what they please, and when they please, not considering the curious independence and waywardness of that strange faculty of thought which belongs to them, and which seems to be an essential part of their moral being, but which yet may be said to have a life, and if one may go so far, even a will of its own. For the truth is that the mind works on of itself without asking leave of us, without our help, and what is more remarkable still, without our knowledge. That this is so in our dreams is apparent to everybody. Is it not a thing that is always surprising us afresh that while we have been asleep our minds have been as busy as ever, working with amazing rapidity, and with a vigour and ingenuity that betrayed no symptom of weariness? Almost in a moment, that fantastic story-teller has woven a romance out of the slenderest materials, a mere hint from a physical sensation, or a fancy that we left it to deal with as it chose, when we sank into unconsciousness, or a sound which never disturbed our slumber, but of which it failed not to take note, and which summoned like a fairy horn, all the strange creatures that were to play their part on the mystic stage. We, as it seemed, had nothing to do with it all. We lay there impassive, at rest. It was not we who thought out those astonishing stories, who put this and that together in the laborious and deliberate fashion which is common to us in our waking hours, when we try to please a child by telling him a tale. It was the mind which built up that visionary fabric, not we ourselves.

And what happens when we are asleep happens

also, in a measure, when we are awake. Is it we who control our thoughts all the day long? Is it not rather our thoughts which control us? The mind pursues its own course. It responds, not waiting for permission, but through the operation of its own laws, to the stimulus which it is constantly receiving through the senses. It is drawn this way by some chance suggestion from without, or driven that way by some impulse from within. And the consequence is that often we have no idea what it is that we are thinking of until, suddenly, we become aware of the regions into which we are being carried, and are filled with shame that we should permit the mind to be occupying itself, as we express it, with such matters. So independent is the mind of man. And how stubborn it is, how rebellious. Let any one try to "fix his mind" on any subject he may select; what hard work it is unless long practice has made it easy. The mind refuses to be fixed. It will not come when it is called, or if it comes it will not stay. It is busy painting pictures and does not like being disturbed. It has run far on into the future, and has no inclination to return, at its owner's call, to the prosaic present. Or, it has escaped again into some happy past, or it is indolent, and languid, and does not wish to be roused.

This is a familiar trouble, and it is easy to see how it makes it often very difficult for us to pray. We try to collect our thoughts, but they are scattered again as soon as they are collected. It is as though we were rolling a huge stone up a steep ascent. We can make it move a little by dint of great exertion,

but it slips back the moment our efforts are relaxed. We try to follow the prayers in church. We try honestly, and we succeed—for how long? Alas! before ever we were aware this restless mind has flitted away, and travelled far to some world with which we had no present concern, but in which it has promptly made itself at home. It is in the counting house; it is in the cricket field; it is anywhere but in the church. We try to pray in private. We begin with what may seem to be genuine prayer, that is, we begin by saying what we feel, or what we are really thinking. But how often the humiliating discovery is made that in some unguarded moment the mind has stolen off on some business of its own, and left us there on our knees repeating phrases that mean nothing, offering formal petitions that run glibly off the tongue from the force of habit, but have in them no life, no soul, no value, no significance whatever. As Faber sings:—

> The world that looks so dull all day,
> Grows bright on me at prayer,
> And plans that ask no thought, but then,
> Wake up, and meet me there."

II. A second difficulty is the difficulty of self-interpretation. Any communion with God that is to be very sincere and real must involve some self-interpretation. The talk with our friends which is most serious, most confidential, is the talk that we have with them about ourselves, the talk that is personal, that concerns the deeper elements of our life. And our communion with God can scarcely be said to have assumed the highest form until it has become personal

in this sense, until we have spoken to Him not of our work merely, or of our friends, or of our condition and circumstances in the world, but of ouselves, our inmost character and secret motive, and the hidden ways of purpose and desire. But in order to speak frankly and honestly of ourselves, after this fashion, we must know something of ourselves; and how hard it is to come to such knowledge! What are my own peculiar and characteristic sins? What are my truest, my most urgent, spiritual needs? What are the ultimate motives that determine the actions I do, that stamp the man that I am? What is the course of that buried life that flows so far below the surface? Who can answer such questions. No one can answer them without painstaking effort. For of all hard problems the problems that meet us when we direct our glance upon the confused and complicated world that is within, are among the hardest to solve. If it is difficult to fix the mind on any subject, it is most of all difficult to fix it on this subject. Sometimes, indeed, an unexpected flash of light will illumine these hidden realms, and explain to us, without deliberate searching on our part, what we are. But to carry the lamp steadily, on and on, deeper and deeper, into those dark chambers, and unexplored recesses of our life, to examine and prove ourselves, to learn where our weakness is, where we have failed, where we have been self-deceived—what patience, what resolution such a process requires!

It is not, of course, contended, that there can be no true and availing prayer that is not accompanied by this searching self-scrutiny. Far otherwise.

But those whose desire it is to speak honestly to God of those things that touch them most deeply, will not be slow to acknowledge that the difficulty of finding their way among the intricacies of their own hidden life is one of the serious difficulties that confront them when they try to pray. "We know not," writes St. Paul, "how to pray as we ought." It is the confusion within that makes the duty often so very hard of fulfilment.

III. There is a third difficulty which bears a close relation to this difficulty of self-interpretation, and is not always easy to distinguish from it. We find it hard to read our own hearts, and to gauge our own spiritual condition. But how often we find it equally hard to interpret the voice of God which seems to be speaking within us. We believe that He is saying something, but what is it that He is saying? The whisper is so low. The words are not articulate. The message is ambiguous. It is not even quite clear that the strange impulse that stirs the heart is from Him at all. We think there is something which He would have us do, but no plain direction is given to us. It is as though He were wishing to speak, but some failure of faculty on our part, or some tumult in the world about us, prevented our hearing. Or there are no such impressions, but we are in perplexity, and are anxious to know what His will is, but cannot find out. We pray for light, but no ray from above seems to illumine the dark pathway before us. It looks as though we should be thrown back, after all, on our own resources of wisdom and knowledge, which, un-

happily, are wholly inadequate. From Heaven there comes no word of direction, no slightest hint on which we might be encouraged to act.

This has been a serious trouble to many devout souls. They have strained the eye, and no sign has come. They have listened till they have grown weary with the effort, but have heard no answering voice. They have wrestled with God, like Jacob, through the night watches, but the morning has found them still bewildered. The secret has not been disclosed. The vision has not become clear. Some One has been with them, but He has not told them His name. He has not told them anything. Communion with that Holy Visitant should mean that He would speak, as well as they. But He has not spoken. It is only they that have been speaking. It is this long strain of waiting, of listening, which constitutes one of the hardest trials of the spiritual life.

IV. Here is another of the elements that make prayer frequently such hard work—the indifference we feel in regard to many things of which those should speak who would pray at all. "My soul," cries the Psalmist, "cleaveth unto the dust." It is even so. The sorrow is, that we cannot bring ourselves to care about the best things, to take a serious interest in them. It is that which stands in our way. And before we can pray with any earnestness we must get rid of this indifference. We must make ourselves care about other matters than those that pertain only to the business or pleasures of the present hour. That is impossible, it may be objected

No! it is not impossible. But it is certainly no light task. One has to rouse the sluggish imagination until it discovers that things which are nothing but names, or vague ideas, so long as the soul is taken up with trivialities, are much more than names, more than ideas, are indeed facts, and facts that transcend all others in importance. Words do not come readily, by which it is possible to describe this process in which the will and the intellect are both involved, but the process itself must be sufficiently familiar to any who have had to mourn that their interest is so languid in what they know to be most worthy of their regard, and that their enthusiasm, is, in ordinary moods, so small, for those ends which it becomes them most diligently to pursue.

V. How to get the faith that is necessary, if prayer is to be true prayer, is another common difficulty. You have only to believe, it is said—just to believe. Only! as if that were the easiest thing in the world. But it is one of the most difficult. Simple enough it is, no doubt, if one can do it. But how is one to do it? How is the soul, whose tendency and habit it is to distrust, to get the better of that tendency, to break away from that habit? How am I to believe that God hears me, and that He will answer me in some wise way, if I do not believe it except in words? It is easy to say, I believe. It is easy to repeat a creed. What can be easier? It is, perhaps, not difficult to listen to the reasons for believing in the mercy and faithfulness of God, and to acknowledge that they are sound and sufficient. It is easy to say the "Lord's Prayer." But to say it as one that means

it, to lay hold of the truth that God is a Father, to trust Him as a Father, to believe in Him as a man believes in the banker with whom he deposits his money, or the physician who tells him he may dismiss his fears; so to believe involves, for some at least, a severe effort of the will. The making up of the mind to act upon the truths we believe, or believe that we believe, is a piece of work that would seem sometimes to be almost beyond our powers. It is like changing our very nature, to compel ourselves to believe, in the sense of exercising an active faith in God, when some instinct of despondency is bidding us to doubt. This is ill understood by some persons. They suppose that believing, when it is not perfectly easy to believe, can be nothing but credulity, not remembering that faith may be hardest when the reasonableness of it is beyond all question. But so it is. There are, of course, things that are hard to believe, because the evidence is so scanty. Then the difficulty is purely intellectual. But how many things there are which are hard to believe, not because there is any lack of evidence, but because of some perversity of disposition, because of some deficiency in moral energy because of the languor of temperament which shrinks from any decisive step. Then the difficulty is not intellectual at all, but moral, or constitutional, and then what is wanted is not more arguments, but more resolution, more courage, more of that spirit which enables a man to say, "I will not be in bondage to these besetting doubts, and this sluggish nature. I will arise and act like a man, as both reason and conscience direct. Trust

in God is rational and right, and trust I will, and not be afraid."

VI. One other element of difficulty has to be named, and that by no means the least considerable. It is hard to pray because it is so hard to be obedient in all things to the Will of God.

Without obedience there can never be communion. How should there be? In the first place there can be no vision, no deep sense of God, without that fidelity to conscience in which obedience to Heaven consists. The pure in heart see God. And the pure in heart are those who seek, in all sincerity and singleness of mind, to do their duty hour by hour. They are the people to whom God becomes a Reality, a Being Who lives and reigns, and Who can be spoken to. We need not stay to inquire why this should be so. The theme is a tempting one, but it is enough to say here that human experience has abundantly proved that it is so. Men have found out that things are revealed to the consecrated spirit, which are hidden from the keen eyes, and persistent search, of the philosophic mind.

And, further, even if it were possible to have any vivid sense of God without the subjection of the human Will to His, there could be no joy in prayer without it. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. Man may meet with God in solitary moments, but he cannot walk with Him in peace and liberty, if he is conscious of any want of harmony between himself and his Companion. He cannot speak freely, he cannot ask for help, or for forgiveness, he cannot even confess his sin, if there is any

sin unrepented of, in other words, if he is insisting, and he knows it, in choosing his own way, in any particular, and not God's way. Inevitably there will be a sense of constraint, and a painful shrinking, and a desire to escape, so long as there is this secret rebellion of the heart, this resolve to hold back something which God claims, and is felt to have a right to claim. From this cause the prayers of men are often fatally hindered. "When ye pray," say, "Our Father, which art in Heaven." That implies trust, which, as we have seen, is difficult to many temperaments. But say also, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." That implies obedience, consecration. And there we break down. We cannot say those words, not from the heart. It is here that the great battle of life has to be fought, the great victory won. It is this which has so often made the quiet inner chamber a place of mortal strife, and the hour of prayer an hour of agony. Men come, or try to come into the Holy Presence, with their unruly passions, their imperious instincts and appetites, their bad feelings, their selfish ambitions; they come wanting to have their own way, demanding this, refusing that, restless because something is not according to their taste, angry and envious at the prosperity of their neighbours; thus, in such a mood, with such tumult within, they come in response to the voice which bids them pray; and the first thing they have to say, before even they may so much as ask for daily bread is this, "Thy will be done." How can they say it, being what they are, feeling as they do? Through what sharp experience

must they pass, what a hard battle must they fight, before they can enter into the home of peace in which tranquil converse with God is possible, and the door of which is open only to the child to whom the Father's Will is above all things sacred and dear.

We have now had under consideration those initial difficulties which are due to a want of definiteness in man's conception of God, and to a want of accessibility to Him, even when His Image has become clear ; and we have also brought under review some of the hindrances of which men are conscious at one time and another, to that prayer which is more than a momentary cry, or a reaching out of the hand after God in the darkness, and partakes rather of the nature of sustained communion.

It remains to deal with certain perplexities which are apt to trouble the mind in regard, not to the act of prayer itself, but to some special forms which it tends naturally to assume.

We will limit our attention to the two forms of confession and petition. The case of confession presents fewer difficulties, perhaps, than those belonging to other kinds of prayer, but a word or two may fitly be said on this subject. If we inquire into the causes which make men hesitate to speak of their failures and sins with any fulness in their intercourse with God, we shall probably discover that the difficulty of reading and rightly interpreting themselves, to which reference has already been made, is one that frequently stands in the way. There is a vague sense of unworthiness, perhaps a pretty clear conviction that in some particular instance they have

gravely erred. But to say precisely wherein and how far they have gone wrong is not easy. Their ignorance of themselves makes any adequate statement appear to be impossible. And we shall find, also, that where such a statement might not seem to be so impossible, a sentiment of pride is apt to prevent the frank investigation of the facts on which it should be based. To confess my sins I must ascertain what they really are—a process involving some close inquiry and careful sifting—and I must be willing to put away the self-esteem which forbids my scanning myself so freely in the less pleasing aspects of my character. And this may require a vigorous effort. But apart from these influences, tending to check the course of candid and particular confession, there is a doubt that will sometimes suggest itself to the mind whether there can be any use in confession of sin, unless it be in the most general terms. Why should anybody try to enumerate all his follies and infirmities to Him Who is already familiar with every item in the black list, and Who knows indeed so much more about them all than the frail creature to whose charge they must be laid? There is nothing I can say that will be better than an imperfect, blundering, recital of facts, the whole significance of which is discerned by Him to whom I try to tell my mournful story. Why then waste words in an endeavour so useless, and so futile, if it were not useless? There might seem to be something plausible in such a plea. At least, it is easy to produce it as an excuse for indolence, or a reason for not doing what would wound our pride.

But the reply to it is not far to seek. There is scarcely any duty against the fulfilment of which we may not find arguments if we choose to look for them, and we may find arguments why we should not be at pains to make any full acknowledgment of our misdeeds to Him whom we have offended. But argue as we will we shall still be conscious, when we are in our better moods, of a moral instinct which outweighs all these ingenious pleas, and which tells us that there is a fitness in this plenary confession, that it is the right thing, that it is due to Him against Whom we have sinned, and Whose Spirit we have grieved. Let a man be honest with himself, and he will know that he ought to make a clean breast of it, that it matters nothing that God knows all, and that the apologies for silence, which are so easy to find, are unworthy of any true child of the Highest. Moreover, as a matter of fact and of experience, there are multitudes who will say that apart from any considerations of what may be reasonable and seemly, they have found it has brought them a sense of infinite relief to speak freely and simply, not only of sin in general, but of this and that sin in particular of which they have been guilty. They never knew, they will tell us, how faithful and just God was, they never understood the greatness of His love, or the sweetness of His mercy until they opened their hearts and spread out their secret sins, as honestly and fully as they could, in the light of His Countenance.

It is, however, in regard to the prayer which takes the form of petition that there seems to be the greatest

amount of confusion and uncertainty in many minds. Why, men are heard to ask, should we ask God to give us anything that is good, when He knows so much better than we do what our needs are, and when, being our Father, He may be trusted to supply those needs without entreaty on our part? Are not these entreaties superfluous? Are they not worse than superfluous? Does it not look as though we distrusted Him, as though we feared He would forget His children if they were not continually reminding Him of their needs?

The consideration of God's true Fatherhood certainly furnishes us with a reason why we should never be clamorous in our prayers; and yet that Fatherhood was regarded by Jesus as an incentive to petition, not as a discouragement. Nor shall we wonder at this, if we reflect that God deals with us truly as with sons in inviting us to ask for what we need, and that with the growth and development of the filial spirit, the need of asking, and the fitness of it, become not less but more apparent. If we were to be never anything but babes, we might expect that everything would be done for us without our making any request, for thus it is that parents deal with their children when they are very little; but when the child grows up and becomes intelligent, the parents' wish is that he should ask for what he may desire. To do this is a mark of confidence, as well as a sign that the child is thinking for himself and is no longer blindly dependent on the provision made for him by others. There would be danger, too, if he had to ask for nothing, that he would take all the parents'

gifts and sympathy for granted, and become thankless and selfish; and thus, if we never asked God for anything, we might easily come to think that He never gave us anything, or to think not at all on the subject, which could neither be pleasing to Him nor good for us. And if it be said that He will not withhold from us any good thing just because we do not ask for it, the reply is that we ought not to reckon upon that. He desires to make men of us, and He cannot make men of us, if we may say so reverently, unless He makes our well-being depend in part on our own effort; and if upon our own effort, why not upon that noble, if difficult, spiritual effort, which is involved in the act and energies of prayer? He does not wish us to be starved either in body or in mind, but body and mind both will be starved unless we are willing to work, and to pray is to work just as truly as when a man digs in the fields, or applies his mind to study.

But is it fitting for us to ask for temporal benefits? That is a question that has been a good deal debated of late years, and not always in a fashion that has been profitable or wise. Limits of space forbid any adequate discussion of it here, but one or two leading principles may briefly be touched upon. First, it will be generally accepted that such prayers must never be put in the place of honest and resolute effort. Whatever propriety there may be in asking for daily bread, or such benefits as bread may be taken to represent, we shall never permit ourselves to regard that asking as a cheap and easy method of obtaining the good things which, according to the wise ordinance

of God, are the reward of the labour of hand or brain. And, next, it will be felt that we are not at liberty to ask for any benefit or supposed benefit, the granting of which would clearly involve a violation of that natural order under which we live. A true instinct forbids us, for instance, to pray that the dead may be restored to life, though we may long to have them back again with passionate desire. We dare not plead that miracles may be wrought on our behalf. While recognizing this, however, we shall not forget how extremely difficult it often is to determine what does, or does not, involve a violation of the natural order. We shall remember how little we know of those relations which exist between the spiritual and the natural world, and how constantly, and in what a variety of ways, material things, as we call them, are being affected by what is happening in the spiritual domain. We shall remember how, within the sphere of our own experience, thought and will are incessantly producing changes, though none can guess by what process, in things belonging to the regions which natural science claims as its own ; and bearing these things in mind, we shall 'seldom be hindered, for fear that we may be demanding a miracle, from asking any good thing of Him Whose relation to the visible world we may presume to be analogous to our own, and Whose power to modify or control, without doing violence to the laws which are the expression of His own mind and will, can scarcely be inferior to that which He has entrusted to His creatures.

And yet it is probable that as the Christian charac-

ter advances to maturity, and the vision of God becomes clearer, the disposition to seek for temporal good will become less and less eager, if it does not wholly vanish away. For in His Presence the things which are often coveted so earnestly are apt to wear quite an altered aspect. If He speaks, and we hear Him, then "grief becomes a solemn scorn of ills." We glory even in infirmity, having the assurance of His grace. If Christ were to come to us at our prayers we could scarcely think of earthly advantages, unless indeed, we ventured so far for some brother in distress. For ourselves, at such a time, what could we ask for but forgiveness, holiness, a heart to love Him better, a will more perfectly consecrated to His service? And when prayer is prayer indeed, it is as though Christ were there by our side, and we had come into the Holy of Holies. And even when no vivid sense of His nearness is granted to us, yet reflecting on the uses of adversity in sweetening and refining the souls of them that suffer, and observing how hard and unlovely are often the characters of those who have their portion in this world, we may well find that our lips falter as we begin to speak of our desire for those things which nature craves, but which would appear to be of no great service to such as would have their place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

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The writer is aware that in this paper he has done little more than approach a vast and momentous theme, to the significance of which the wisest minds could not hope, in many volumes, to do justice. The

more any man ponders the subject of prayer, and tries to utter his thoughts, the more conscious he will be of the slenderness of his achievements, and the poverty of his best efforts: but if any who should think it worth his while to glance at these unpretending pages, should be led thereby to think more seriously of this divine art, and should be encouraged to the study and practice of it, there will be one at least who will feel that he has met with the dearest recompense he could desire, a recompense not less grateful to him because he will know that it is altogether beyond his deserts.

VII.

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

FRANCIS HERBERT STEAD.

The Kingdom and the Church.

THE central significance with which the Christian religion invests the idea of the Kingdom of God is one of the chief theological discoveries of the present age. It is a discovery due to many causes. The aggressive individualism of the Evangelical Revival led on logically to a deeper conception of the social aims of Christianity. The very passion for the salvation of individual souls brought men face to face with social conditions destructive of the souls they sought to save, and forced them to press for social remedies. Evangelism became philanthropy. Foreign missions developed a national conscience on the question of slavery, and on the treatment of subject races. Home missions gave a new impulse to municipal and industrial reform. The Sunday School initiated a national system of education. These and a host of other ameliorative movements, which were the direct outcome of Evangelical effort, required a theological connection and interpretation which the old Evangelical scheme did not supply. The social principle of the Gospel which is implicit in every genuine Christian act, demanded explicit recognition and enunciation.

In the world at large the reaction from the analytic and individualistic tendencies of the eighteenth century has assumed constructive shape. Sociology has taken its place among the recognised sciences. The 'Era of Association' has dawned. And in the light of the new day men have turned to ask, 'What of the old faith? Is it merely, as its adherents have commonly professed, a scheme of personal salvation? Or has it any law or plan of collective conduct?' Sympathy and self-defence alike demanded an answer to the challenge. Christianity has been obliged to declare its essential character as the religion of fellowship, and has thus risen to a new consciousness of its own absolute worth as sociological ideal.

This advance has been much accelerated by a more scientific study of Scripture. Criticism has endeavoured to set the facts of Revelation in a truer historical perspective. Their theological valuation has been correspondingly readjusted. In the field of New Testament research the store set by contemporary documents did at first focus attention on the indisputable Epistles of Paul; but the failure of the crude Tübingen attempt to make the apostle the virtual founder of Christianity has flung men back on the distinctive and fontal teaching of Jesus. On the overthrow of the Baur dynasty has followed the ascendency of the school of Ritschl. The microscopic criticism and corrective comparison to which the Synoptic records have on all hands been subjected, place the essential elements of our Lord's message in strong relief. Henceforth no one ought

to be ignorant of the fact—which once pointed out remains clear as daylight to the most casual reader of the New Testament—that the central theme of the Gospel of Jesus is the Kingdom of God. And of the essentially social nature of this idea we have been providentially reminded by the prominence into which the recent overturn in Old Testament criticism has thrust the prophets. They have stood out with fresh clearness from the setting of their times as preachers and pioneers of an ideal Commonwealth; and our new knowledge of their social hope enables us the better to understand what it was that the Christ came to fulfil. Only ignorance can now repeat the charge that Christianity is no more than a religious individualism, or can style that class of teaching Evangelical which ignores the social theme of the Divine Evangelist. For the modern era of association, both in its thinking and in its doing, the one thing needful is 'The Gospel of the Kingdom.'

I.—THE GENERAL IDEA OF THE KINGDOM.

i. Use of the Term in Scripture.

The phrase which was so constantly on the lips of Jesus—the Aramaic original of ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—denotes literally 'the royal rule of God.' It is used in two senses, a general and a special.

(1) It is often chosen to express the eternal and immutable sovereignty of God. This is obviously an arrangement totally independent of the will of the

creature and one which can have no beginning in any portion of time or space. It is co-extensive and co-eval with the universe (Ps. ciii. 19 ; cxlv. 13, etc.).

(2) The much more frequent use of the term is that which assigns to it a local and historical meaning. It was applied to the empire of Israel under David (cf. 2 Sam. v. 12 ; 1 Chron. xvii. 14 ; 2 Chron. xiii. 8), and then to its expected re-instatement at a later time. The hope of this re-instatement was a darling theme of the prophets, and in their hands gradually advanced both as respects extent and content, until the Apocalyptic Seer could foretell a reign of 'everlasting righteousness,' to embrace all peoples, nations, and languages (Dan. ix. 24 ; vii. 13, 14). To this hope Jesus directly attached Himself. He came announcing that the time was fulfilled, and that the long expected event had arrived. First the Kingdom was 'at hand' (Mark i. 15), next, though not including John the Baptist, greatest of woman-born (Luke vii. 28), it had 'come upon' His contemporaries (Luke xi. 20), and was already 'in the midst of' them (Luke xvii. 21).[1] On its commencement during His earthly career would follow, after an interval of undefined duration, its heavenly consummation (Mark xiii. etc.). The thing thus typified, expected and announced as emerging at a definite time and place is manifestly distinct from the universal and eternal government of God.[2] It is not

[1] 'In the midst of,' not 'within.' The Kingdom of God was certainly not 'within' the Pharisees whom Jesus was addressing.

[2] The two ideas, the universal and the particular, are brought into direct relation with each other in the Book of Daniel. The

merely the royal rule of God, but the realization of that rule in the corresponding attitude of those who are ruled. It is the reciprocal and appropriate relation of the Divine Monarch and His subjects. It is therefore a community possessing Head and members in normal connection: the Apocalyptic Seer could say of the Christ, *He made us to be a Kingdom* (Rev. i. 6; cf. v. 10). In the conception thus enriched, neither correlate may be safely overlooked. The Kingdom is not to be etherealized until it is simply equivalent to the attitude which God assumes to the human race in Jesus Christ: nor is it to be materialized so as to stand merely for the aggregate of subjects or citizens. The Kingdom is at once Reign *and* Realm, a constitution *and* a State, a social order *and* a Society. So it can be alike historical reality and ultimate ideal.

ii. The Kingdom in Itself.

Our concern is here exclusively with the Kingdom in the special twofold sense. As the purpose moreover of this essay is to present the Kingdom in its relation to modern life, we may not now retrace the fascinating story of its prophetic development, but must restrict ourselves to a summary view of its contents, as it emerges in the fulness of the times. The key to this is given in the fact that the character of the Anointed Ruler, or the Christ, is

Kingdom of the Most High *is* an everlasting Kingdom (iv. 3). He rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will (iv. 17, 35); but after a Divinely controlled succession of sinful world-empires, He *will set up* His Kingdom (ii. 44).

decisive of the character of the Kingdom. He is the personal index of the social whole. Just as when David was the Christ (the Lord's Anointed), the Kingdom of God was essentially Davidic, so in Evangelic times, when Jesus is the Christ, His Person and work and word fix its meaning for us. The God, whose the Kingdom is, is in His thought, Father, His Father, Father of all men ; and His own perfect Sonship mirrors the perfectness of the Divine Fatherhood. He is the Son of Man or (to drop the Semitic idiom), The Man, the personal and regnant (cf. Dan. vii. 13) ideal of humanity, the norm and the authority established by God. The subjects of the Kingdom are accordingly children of God, brothers and liegemen to the Christ, brothers to each other. The Law of the Kingdom is the expression of their filial and fraternal life. It is the spirit of conduct, not a statute-book ; a conscience rather than a code. It is summed up in a righteousness which is love—a love that surrenders self to God and regards neighbour equally with self. It is rendered concrete in the command, '*Follow Me.*' For in relation to the Father, Jesus is the ideal Subject ; in relation to His followers He is the ideal King ; and so in His own person He realizes the Kingdom. He is in personal form what it is in social.

The sayings of Jesus concerning the Kingdom viewed statically may be shortly combined in the following working description : *The Kingdom of God is the fellowship of Souls Divine and human, of which the Law and the Life alike are Love, wherein the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, as*

both are embodied and revealed in Jesus The Christ, are recognised and realized.

With this epitome of the Master's teaching, Paul's great deliverance in Romans xiv. 17, 18, fully accords. Writing on the vexed question of meats, the Apostle reminds both parties to the dispute that after all it does not touch the essence of their Christian life. The essential activity of the Kingdom does not consist in the choice of foods, or in anything of that nature, but in ethical qualities, adjustments, enjoyments, religiously inspired. *The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*[1] *For*, the Apostle proceeds to show, such a manner of life meets the claims of the three great Components of the fellowship ; *he that herein serveth the Christ is well-pleasing to God and approved of men.*

These summary sentences describe what existed in the Galilean group of Jesus and His Apostles. They also describe the final outcome of time. A reality in the first century of our era, and a reality ever since, the Fellowship remains to the end of human history an unattained goal. It is the ultimate ideal in the course of progressive realization.

iii. The Kingdom and the Sinful Self.

But that realization begins with Jesus. He introduced it as a novelty to human experience. The fellowship of filial and fraternal love was proclaimed to a society, in which behaviour towards God was un-

[1] As is implied in the Gospels, and explicit in the Epistles, the Holy Spirit is the common Life of the Kingdom.

filial, and towards man unfraternal. It made evident, therefore, that all men had missed the mark, and fallen short of the imperative purpose of God. But this failure was also guilt, for by fulfilling what had gone before, in popular presentiments, in social institutions, in poetry, philosophy, prophecy, the New Order revealed itself as the implicit law of the universal conscience. Because it was the completion, the Kingdom was the condemnation, of prior attainments in morals and religion. To use the convenient New Testament phrase for mankind apart from the Kingdom, the world—the whole world—was brought under judgment.

Yet the Kingdom came to take over the world into itself. It was *not of this world*, it was to be in and over the world (John xviii. 36; xvii. 15; xvi. 33). Upon all forms of society the transition was obligatory; but the first and chief call was to individuals. The demands made on them and their responsive experience reveal what is involved in the transition from the world to the Kingdom. '*Repent and believe in the good news* of the Kingdom' were the first imperatives; which, later, reappear in the more graphic behests, '*Turn and become as little children*,' '*Receive the Kingdom as a little child;*" but the conditions received their most drastic form from Jesus just after He had been declared by His disciples to be the Christ: '*If any man would come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.*' In other words, 'let him die to self: let him be as thoroughly prepared for the extremity of pain and infamy as is the condemned malefactor, who, on

leaving the hall of judgment for the place of execution shoulders the instrument of his death[1]; let him be resolved at all risks and at all costs to follow Me.' *For whosoever would save his life, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it.* Absolute self-surrender to the Christ is the strait gate by which men enter into the Life that is synonymous with the Kingdom. Primarily, therefore, the passage from the world to the Kingdom is no easy scarcely perceptible flow from one stage of growth to another. The detachment and the attachment strike down to the very roots of the soul.

iv. The Kingdom and the Cross.

The individual, as we have seen, must, in entering the Kingdom, experience a revulsion from his previous drift of conduct, a break with his past, a death to self. But the self to which he dies is a part of the Old Order. The Kingdom may therefore be said to represent an organized breach in the sequence of human sinfulness, a collective death to the world. Hence it follows that the founding of the Kingdom involved a once-for-all decisive rupture with the continuity of sin, a fundamental death to the world, which is presupposed in the self-negation of every individual entering the Kingdom, and which alone renders his entrance possible. The conditions on which the Kingdom of God becomes real to the in-

[1] 'Let him put the hangman's halter round his neck and begin his march to the gallows,' would be a milder modern version of 'let him take up his cross.'

dividual lead us back inevitably to the central condition on which it becomes real to the race. The mystery of the Death of Christ has been treated of in a previous essay, and may not here be investigated anew; but no treatment of the subject now under discussion would be tolerable which did not recognise that the Kingdom was historically established and ratified by the Cross. The intimate relation which Paul discovered between the death and resurrection of our Lord on the one side, and of the transition-processes of the individual soul on the other, is not to be described as 'mystical' so much as genetic and historical. The transcendent sacrifice of the Son of Man was veritably the death of the old humanity and the birth of the new. The new social organism was separated by a mortal antagonism from the old social organism while, at the same time, the continuity of the race, which exists in both the old and the new, was wondrously maintained. In the death of the Christ the negation of the world and the affirmation of the Kingdom were alike absolute.

v. The Realm of the Justified.

Once the frontier of the Kingdom is crossed entrants find themselves in fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and (ideally regarded) with all the brethren. Their previous sin is no bar to this fellowship. It is theirs as though they had not sinned. That is to say, their sins are forgiven. In offering them the Kingdom, therefore, the Father has

offered full pardon for all they have done, or may still do, amiss. But they are treated more generously than as if they were simply sinless. The confession of every deep Christian experience is that we are treated as though we possessed a high moral worth in the sight of God—a worth such as our previous conduct utterly belies. We are virtually pronounced righteous. We are *justified*. By actions that speak louder than words, we are declared fit for close communion with God. We are granted full civil rights in the Kingdom of God. We are welcomed to the dearest intimacies of the family of God. And we are emboldened to accept these privileges. We have a feeling, explain it how we may, that there passes over to us in some manner or measure the absolute worth which the Christ possesses in the sight of the Father. The relation in which we thus find ourselves can be only partially described by forensic terms such as 'justification' or 'adoption': they fail to express its inwardness and productiveness. It naturally clothes itself now, as in Paul's day, in images derived from vital growth. By the complete surrender of self to the Christ, the soul becomes incorporate with Him. It is engrafted into the Good Olive Tree, and becomes a partaker of Its root and fatness. It is made a member of the body of Christ, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. It becomes included within His personality. Granted that in the effort to portray this transcendent union, all figures must fail, and speech itself sink into silence, still to the Christian consciousness in its hours of deepest feeling and clearest insight, the vital metaphor

seems least inadequate. We are '*in* Christ Jesus,' and therefore we are justified.

Hence justification, though an essential note of the Kingdom and belonging to all its members, is no more than one element in the citizenship of the Kingdom. Citizenship is obviously a very much larger thing than justification. By neglect of this vital fact, by laying its chief stress on justification and omitting to include it in the completer notion of the Kingdom, historic Evangelicalism has become one-sided, individualistic, and imperfectly ethical. Solafidian excesses would never have been possible, had it been properly recognised that by being justified a man is constituted a citizen in a great ethical commonwealth, and is called to discharge his duties as a citizen worthily (Phil. i. 27).

vi. Relation of Religious and Ethical Aspects.

Yet the opposite error, so prevalent at the present day, of treating the Kingdom as an almost exclusively ethical principle must be not less resolutely avoided. A careful adjustment is necessary between the religious and the ethical aspects of the evangelic Fellowship: both aspects are there: neither may safely be exaggerated. The Kingdom, we need to bear in mind, is at once a boon and a task. It is a privilege to be received and a problem to be worked out. The privilege is manifest primarily in forgiveness or justification which is the free gift of God in Jesus Christ, and in His not less gracious guid-

ance from day to day. The problem is to make real in every act of life the ideal of the Kingdom. Those who *receive the Kingdom as a little child* are bidden *seek first the Kingdom.* It is quite true that the boon itself sets a task. The proffer of the Kingdom prescribes the duties of repentance and faith, of utter self-negation and surrender to the Christ. The recipient is not allowed to be merely passive. To receive God's supreme gift of the Kingdom is to be intensely active. But it is more true to say that even the task is a boon,—the setting of the problem is the bestowment of a high privilege. To be shown the true goal of life, to have given us for our childlike acceptance the Highest Good which the strenuous efforts of a long line of philosophers had failed to discover, is a blessing unspeakable. For the Kingdom organizes our duties, sets them in due proportion and perspective, supplies the motive for their discharge, and surpasses our sublimest ambitions with the vision of a likeness to the infinite perfectness of God. The Kingdom is, in fact, God's aim more than ours: He graciously permits us to share in achieving His purpose. Thus the Kingdom is not merely nor mainly an ethical principle. It is first and last and chiefly a religious. We work out our own salvation only because God works in us to will and to work. '*It is your Father's good pleasure to* give *you the Kingdom.*'

II.—SOCIAL ARTICULATION OF THE KINGDOM.

The manner in which the Kingdom absorbs the

various communities into which men have organized themselves, presents features of marked unlikeness to its conquest of individuals. From the fact that the Kingdom extends primarily by winning over individuals, and that there are few communities all of whose members have simultaneously entered the Kingdom, the *personnel* of most communities is mixed, being partly Christian and partly non-Christian. Hence for the community viewed thus empirically the process of entrance into the Kingdom is generally very gradual. Then, too, the principal forms of existing society do not excite in the Kingdom the same mortal hostility which it assumes towards the egoistic self. On the contrary, it discerns in them the preliminary organization of man's better self. They represent his partial victory over egoism, isolation, suspicion, strife. Within the world they are prophecies and rudiments of the Kingdom. However profaned and stained they may have been by human sin, they yet remain forms prepared by God for the moral education of the race. As such they are taken up into the Kingdom and accepted as elements in its own richer life. It reveals the Divine idea latent in each, and by working to remove whatever is at variance with that idea, strives to bring them all to their own distinct perfectness. It assigns to each social organism a place in its own general system ; for the Kingdom is the true 'organism of organisms.'

Thus the image of leaven in meal best describes the manner of the Kingdom's extension in human society. Its progress is gradual, its method pervasive. It does not abolish, it assimilates. It conserves

while it transforms. True, it does not exclude movement by revolution, convulsion, catastrophe; but it regards these as incidents in a generally steadier course. Its chief analogies are those of ordered growth. It is a thing of Evolution. In tracing the laws and phases of the Kingdom of God, we are pursuing along its topmost plane the Social Evolution of man.

This fact lends a deep significance to the earthly history of the Kingdom. It constitutes that history a continuous and expanding Revelation. The life and teachings of our Lord as experienced and reported by His earliest followers, do undoubtedly contain implicit all that will ever be known of the Kingdom. But only the ages will make it explicit. Only a progressive Christian experience can definitely declare how the wider realms shall be determined which the Kingdom—cradled at first in the narrowest social conditions—later encounters or evolves. This revelatory value of the social evolution of the Kingdom is a principle of the utmost importance to a true system of Christian Sociology.

i. The Home.

First among the developments of social life which are included in the Kingdom naturally stands the Home. It is the first school of human fellowship, and so becomes the threshold of the Kingdom. It is a cluster of many ties. (1) The Christ's teaching concerning *Marriage* sheds much light on the way in which existing social structures are taken over into

His realm. He finds marriage a reality, a reality which He refers to the primal edict of God, but which has hitherto stood on the plane of life outside of and below the Kingdom. He raises it into the Kingdom by revealing the Divine ideal within the reality, and by demanding the renunciation of every law, custom or thought, which conflicts with the ideal (Mark x. 2-12; Matt. v. 27-32). According to the Christ marriage is the personal unity of one man and one woman, a personal unity which is created by God, and which no human being may dissolve. Husband and wife constitute a single personality. This declaration, though couched in ancient Hebrew phrase, is no hyperbole; it is the deliberate and reiterated decree of the Christ when asked to distinguish the marriage-law of His Kingdom from the marriage-law of Israel. (2) The idea of the home becomes yet more manifest in the *Family*. The higher self which enspheres husband and wife reflects itself in their offspring. And concerning the children the Christ has said, '*Of such is the Kingdom of God*.' He thus lifts up into the Divine Commonwealth all the many ties which are implied in the presence of children: ties parental, filial, brotherly and sisterly. (3) The *Household* is a yet wider circle, because often including servants also. Since the apostles regarded the compulsory tasks of household slaves as free service of the Christ, the voluntary offices of the modern domestic come *a fortiori* within the sphere of the Kingdom. (4) The *Friendly Circle*, which is formed by the normal overflow of family affection, is the theatre of half the Christian virtues, and, especially

in the exercise of hospitality, is marked out by the Christ as a chosen agency for the extension of His sway. As this glance at its chief phases reminds us, the Home is a model in miniature of the Kingdom. The keywords of the Kingdom are nearly all borrowed from the Home.

ii. The State.

The State, in all its grades and groupings, is taken over into the Kingdom. Its developments in a pre-Christian or non-Christian or partly Christianized stage are rudiments of the riper growth to be. *The powers that be are ordained of God*, even though a Nero wield them. The Kingdom therefore evinces a most loyal and sensitive regard for all existing forms of government. Its inward freedom can bend to every local or imperial authority, except when repudiation of the Christ is demanded. The temple tribute must be paid. What is Cæsar's Cæsar rightly claims; Paul amplifies the Master's brevity when he declares that giving Cæsar Cæsar's is really giving God's to God. Obedience to earthly rulers is part of our heavenly citizenship.

But this humble compliance with existing political institutions does not mean that the Kingdom has no politics of its own. The Kingdom itself, as the very word reminds us, and as the age-long preparation in Israel abundantly testifies, is a political ideal. In its Evangelic form it was declared to be the ultimate form of government. *All rule and all authority and power* should be superseded by it (1 Cor. xv. 24). The

seer of Patmos proclaimed with transcendent audacity, *The Kingdom of the world*—the œcumenical empire that had been Assyria's, Babylon's, Persia's, Macedon's, and then was Rome's—*the Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ* (Rev. xi. 15).

1. *Democratic Sympathies of the Kingdom.*

Of the political import of the Kingdom much could not, for obvious reasons, be unfolded in New Testament times. But the general silence was to some extent broken when the political ambition of the sons of Zebedee led the Christ to develop in contrast with the politics of the world the politics of His Fellowship (Mark x. 35-45). His words make evident that in the Christian community government is service, and that as servant and service are for the good of the served, so all government exists for the good of the governed. The chief place in the Evangelic state belongs to the self-sacrificing person who has most capacity and will for service. He is the prime minister. In this cluster of sayings, Jesus, to use the modern antithesis, declares for 'industrialism' as against 'militarism,' and uses words which favour republican simplicity far more than imperial pageantry. The general drift of His teachings makes it not hard to explain how it happens that in lands where Christianity is purest and strongest, the State tends to become a complete democracy. What, for example, is the highest political expression which can be given to His conception of the worth of the human soul irrespective of its

station, culture, sex? What but the extension of the franchise to every adult personality? And how better can the sovereign will of God for the State be ascertained than by the consentient judgment of His children, with His voice directly audible in their consciences? The principle of representation is not foreign to the Kingdom: is but a special form of its vicarious spirit and service. Since *the powers that be are ordained of God*, what medium of ordination yet discovered accords more fully with the Fellowship of the Christ than the free choice of confiding brethren? To maintain that the Kingdom regards all forms of rule, autocratic, oligarchic, democratic, with indifference, or with a neutrality equally benevolent, is to ignore the teachings of Revelation as well as the facts of subsequent Christian experience.

2. *Imperial Traditions of the Kingdom.*

At the same time the Kingdom, with all its democratic sympathies, stands in the line of world-empire. The dream of a universal monarchy was a prophecy of the Christ. The course of widening domination suggested by the names of Nineveh, Babylon, Susa, Alexandria, and Rome, was an actual preparation for His reign. On Rome, significantly enough, 'Christendom' succeeds, and with few exceptions other than China and Japan, the whole world is now in a sense included under Christendom. The archaic amalgam of 'Holy Roman Empire' and Papal Cæsarism has been broken up and cast into the furnace of modern democracy, but the imperial hope of the Kingdom is only thereby refined and purified. It

contemplates as its certain achievement the Earth One State.

How are these imperial traditions to be reconciled with the democratic tendencies already traced? This is an amplification of a very old problem, one phase of which is the burning question of present-day politics: the problem of combining on a large scale freedom and unity. But the Kingdom by demanding at the same time the largest unity and the largest freedom concentrates the difficulty. What solution does it offer to its own problem?

3. *The Problem of Unity and Freedom: how Solved.*

Obviously this is an inquiry which could not arise or be explicitly disposed of in New Testament times. It can only be answered by watching the political experience which has been most largely influenced by the Kingdom, and by finding out how far the principles evolved were latent in the Gospels and Epistles. Now, as it happens, the spectacle of the fullest freedom and the widest unity that have yet been combined in human history, is furnished by English Christendom. What is the secret of this unique achievement? Put in a sentence, it is the gradation and federation of local self-government. Village or town, county, province or State, Dominion or Commonwealth or United States form the ascending series of autonomous areas. Each area is self-governed in all that pertains to its own affairs, without trenching on the business of the grade above or below it. But each links with the

rest that are on the same grade to erect the grade above. Were the English system developed a stage or two further, we should see the five great groups of the English folk federated internally and reciprocally : (1) a federated 'British Isles,' (2) the United States of America, (3) the Canadian Dominion, (4) the Commonwealth of Australasia, (5) a federated South Africa,—all united in a colossal federation of federations. There need be no limit to the extension of the principle, once the peoples are ripe for the democratic franchise. This solitary condition fulfilled, the entire world might easily form as complete a political unity as is now exhibited by the United States. The formula of 'Federated Democracies' appears to solve the problem of the unification of an enfranchised humanity.

But this solution was practically unknown to pre-Christian politics. Unity was almost always sacrificed to freedom, or freedom to unity. The all but invariable dilemma was, Union under autocracy or democracy with disunion. The democracies, so-called, were moreover really no more than oligarchies of freemen despotically governing masses of slaves. The people who first solved the problem on the grand scale never came directly under the sway of pre-Christian civilization ; almost from their first barbaric simplicity, English institutions have been under Christian influences. The great American precedent must be traced back to the efforts of Pilgrim and Puritan settlers, who sought to reconstruct society on Scriptural principles. It is not patriotic self-conceit to affirm that in English

Christendom political progress has been most under the control of Christian ideas.

The historical connection between the development of this political synthesis, and the advance of the Kingdom, becomes explicable when we remember the genius of Christianity for conserving distinctions even in the act of transcending them. It jealously guards the individuality of the person. It equally protects the home from disintegration. It extends the same shelter to local attachments. It retains in purer form the civic ideals which gathered round the ancient city of Jehovah. The early Churches showed what an intensity of local life and local freedom it can create. As the religion advanced it went on conserving and creating larger social wholes. The brotherhood of men, as the Gospel teaches it, involves the sisterhood of communities. Just because the Christian system of life is so intensely concrete, it guards local freedom while it works for general unity. Herein it offers a marked contrast to the abstract World-State of the Stoics. The principle of 'Federated Democracies' is, we may conclude, not distantly akin to the principle whereby the Kingdom will ultimately unify mankind.

So conceived, the Kingdom becomes a lamp to our feet amid the dark windings of modern politics. It constrains us to work for freedom and for the institutions which objectify freedom. It requires Christian democracies to regard the 'subject races' as the wards of freedom, to be trained for the righteous exercise of the adult franchise. It sets before the peoples of the world the vision of ultimate in-

corporation in one State, and bids them regulate thereby all their present international relations. To this goal it lights up the successive steps of peace-policy, arbitration-treaty, alliance, federation, first between peoples of the same race and then between all races. No political conception possesses more living significance than the Evangelic idea of the State ; and no political service would be of greater value to-day than by a thorough investigation and popular statement of that idea to bring it home to the conscience of the New Democracy.

iii. The Economic System.

Of Christian Economics, not less than of Christian politics, the age demands a fully articulated system, for there is singularly little knowledge of the Kingdom in its economic phase. There has even prevailed a general impression that industry and commerce, along with their associated activities, do not properly come under the sway of the Christ, but are regulated by another and entirely different set of rules. Happily men are now able to distinguish between law as an empirical statement of what has happened, or is likely to happen, in the economic sphere, and law as an ethical precept or statement of what ought to happen there. They are ready to admit that laws of both kinds may exist. Economic action may be registered and classified like other forms of action, even vicious or criminal action, but that fact does not exempt it from the general control of duty. And the Christian knows but one

principle of duty: '*Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*,' the Anointed Head of the Kingdom. Economic relations, bound up as they are with the entire system of human society, could not lie outside of His social doctrine. The Kingdom contains an economic ideal.

To this fact the whole course of revelation bears witness, from the rudimentary injunction *Thou shalt not steal*, down to the demand which the indwelling *love of God* makes on him that *hath the world's goods* (Ex. xx. 15; 1 John iii. 17). The various codes of Israelitish law contain copious instructions concerning the acquisition, use, and disposal of property. Laws of land, labour, loans, abound, and the ethical aim which regulates them is explicitly the mitigation, if not the removal, of want (Deut. xv. 4). Economic injustice draws from the prophets some of their most terrible denunciations. The coming Kingdom of God is portrayed by them as a realm, not merely of spiritual blessing, but of material well-being. They look forward to the abolition of poverty, and break forth into singing at the prospect of a universal plenty, which shall be enjoyed in peace because shared in equity. When the Christ appears, He does not assume the *rôle* of a purely spiritual benefactor. On His lips also the Kingdom comes as good news for the poor and hungry and as rebuke to the rich and surfeited (Luke vi. 20-26). Refusing Himself to supersede or usurp the functions of the civil judge (Luke xii. 13, 14), just as He declined to accept the earthly king-

ship of Israel (John vi. 15), He takes the higher post of spiritual legislator, and lays down principles for the judging and dividing of all wealth.

The keynote of His valuation of economic effort is struck in the saying that human life is other and more than the abundance of things possessed (Luke xii. 15). Personality, not property, is the chief thing. Life, multiplied and intensified, not the greatest possible accumulation of commodities, is the aim given to regulate the industrial and commercial conduct of men and of nations. In other words, the Kingdom stands first as the object of quest; the pursuit of commodities, even of the most necessary, belongs to a much lower plane (Matt. vi. 33). The primary purpose which the getting and using and spending of wealth must subserve, is the fuller recognition of God's Fatherhood, and the fuller realization of human brotherhood. In the light of this Evangelic law, wealth, as it is ordinarily produced and obtained, naturally appears as *the mammon of unrighteousness* or *filthy lucre* (Luke xvi. 9; Titus i. 11); and even when it comes into Christian hands does not lose the stamp of sin. But whatever its origin or medium, wealth, once obtained, must be used. Hoarding is sternly discountenanced (Luke xix. 23). By direct gift, or by any other means which Christian wisdom finds to be more helpful, wealth is to be used to relieve distress, to improve the lot of the poor, to readjust the inequalities of life, to promote fellowship, to win a heavenly recompense and an eternal friendship (Luke xiii. 33; xvi. 8-12, etc.). Holding

wealth only for these ideal ends, members of the Kingdom are bidden to renounce all anxiety about it, and to cherish a cheerful trust in the Fatherly providence of God (Luke xii. 22 ff.). Where riches are not thus regarded and employed, they become a manifold curse. They block the way to the Kingdom (Mark x. 23). They make a man unbrotherly to his fellow-man and unfilial to God (Luke xvi. 13-15, 19 ff.). *All kinds of evil* spring from the selfish love of abundance; it hurries men on to *destruction and perdition* (1 Tim. vi. 9 f.).

These reminiscences of Evangelic teaching sufficiently attest that the Kingdom is the principle destined to comprise and command every economic action and relation. The same conclusion is confirmed by a glance at the outstanding facts of modern commerce and industry. Despite the fierceness of competition within each State and the war of tariffs between the nations, the world is, after all, one trading community. In the domain of material wealth, all nations serve each other, all men serve each other. The fellowship of man has been more widely realized in the economic sphere than in any other. Though marred and stained by a selfishness ubiquitous and colossal, the economic system in its essence and drift is unquestionably included under the Kingdom of God. It is obviously intended to be the material expression of universal brotherhood. As such, it possesses a prophetic and even sacramental significance. Fulfilled, it becomes the world's Holy Supper.

The Kingdom thus understood contains the secret

of all economic reform. It supplies the goal. It assigns the guiding principles. It brings economic development into proper relation with the other sides of human progress. Whatever stores of codified and organized fact may be accumulated by the traditional political economy, it is the Kingdom which decides the ethical worth of the history thus presented, and the use to which the information shall be put. It judges the rival tendencies of individualism and socialism. It completes the half truths of both, and reconciles them in a Divine synthesis.

iv. Other Social Spheres.

The works of healing which accompanied and accredited the first proclamation of the Gospel (Mark iii. 14, 15; Luke vii. 22; xi. 20) are a standing reminder that the Kingdom comprises the vast cluster of acts and agencies which aim to promote, maintain and restore the health of the human body. 'The Gospel of Sanitation' is part of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The same may be said of dietetics and sound measures of food reform; of preventive medicine so far as it is ethically mindful of human and animal rights, as well as of the whole body of medicine and surgery built up in literature, schools and hospitals.

Since no complete enumeration of the manifold forms of fellowship through which the Kingdom is fulfilling itself can here be attempted, the great realms of Art, Literature, and Science, must be dismissed with the merest mention. Each of the three,

by forming a community of interest which increasingly unites men of different tongues and climes and times, manifestly makes for human brotherhood. Art is a fellowship. 'The Republic of Letters' is more than a metaphor. Science gathers its votaries into what is practically one World-University. The Divine side of the Kingdom is also not absent. Art is the intuition of Incarnation: under its creative touch sense becomes the perfect vehicle of soul, flesh manifests God. Literature, as mirroring the best life of the humanity which is created and trained for the Divine Fellowship, reveals God leading man forward to that goal, becomes therefore a record of Revelation, and taken in its totality may claim the title of Holy Scripture. Science, again, is but the organized discovery of the kinship of the human reason to the Reason that is in Nature. The scientific habit of mind—with its fearless questioning, its self-denying humility, its faith that truth is attainable—is but the practical corollary to belief in the Divine Fatherhood. True knowledge of Nature is an integral part of the process by which *all things* are *subjected to* man (Heb. ii. 8), that man may be the more fully subject to God.

III.—THE CHURCH.

Hitherto we have dealt with social organizations which existed before the Christ came, and which may exist where His Kingdom is unknown. We now come to treat of a social organization which

owes its very existence to the historical emergence of the Kingdom, and which abides as outstanding witness to the actuality of the same. Essential to any true thought of the Kingdom is a correct notion of the Church.

i. Use of the Term in Scripture.

It is surprising to find how rarely the word *Church* occurs in the Gospels. Entirely absent from *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, it appears in *Matthew* only thrice (xvi. 18; xviii. 17a, 17b), in passages about the genuineness of which critics are very far from agreeing. Yet if the name was wanting, there can be no doubt that the thing was there. Jesus selected and *appointed twelve*—so runs the earliest narrative—*whom also He named Apostles, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach and to have authority to cast out devils* (Mark iii. 14 f.). In constituting this social and aggressive agency, and in assigning to its members a distinctive name, He virtually founded the Church. A nucleus of organization was formed, which is historically one with the body later known under that designation. It is quite conceivable that at the glowing moment of Peter's confession, *Thou art the Christ*, some mention was made of the society destined to continue and complete that confession. It is also possible that Jesus employed the historic title given in the text. The Greek word which we render Church (*Ekklesia*) is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *Qāhāl*, which denotes 'the congregation' or 'as-

sembly' of the people of Israel, generally as united for purposes of worship. Jesus' obvious reference at the Supper to the inaugural rites recorded of Moses at Sinai (Mark xiv. 24; cf. Ex. xxiv. 8) suggests that He may have thought and spoken of some Evangelic parallel to the Mosaic *Qahal*. 'My *Qahal*' on His lips implies that 'the Church' is to the new theocracy as 'the congregation' was to the old; the association, namely, of all subjects of the Kingdom in conscious and active relation to God. Doubtless the classical use of *Ekklesia*, to denote the mass meeting of the voting citizens of a given State, also lent its own connotation to the Christian term.

Nevertheless, in the Epistles of Paul, the Church does not at the outset appear as equivalent to the aggregate of all believers. The term is at first applied to assemblies that are many and local, not to a body one and universal. It occurs four times in the two earliest Epistles and all in this sense.[1] First in Gal. i. 13—'*I persecuted the Church of God*'—does Paul employ the phrase of a larger than merely local unity.[2] In his next extant letter (1 Cor. xii. 28) 'the Church' is mentioned in an absolute and universal sense, as the community which includes Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles and other gifts; and the context seems in some sort to identify the Church so conceived with the *One Body* into which '*we were all*

[1] 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 i. 1; 1 ii. 14; 2 i. 4. So Gal. i. 2; i. 22.

[2] For his persecuting ardour was not restricted to the Church at Jerusalem, but extended 'even unto foreign cities,' Acts xxvi. 11.

baptized, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free.'[1] In 2 *Corinthians* the word denotes only particular communities.[2] *Romans* uses it five times, all in the last chapter, and all of local bodies. Paul's greatest Epistle—the chief statement of his theology—never once mentions 'Church' in the catholic sense.[3] But in *Colossians* and *Ephesians* the idea of the one universal Church advances into a new prominence.[4] 'The Church,' spoken of absolutely, is the Body of Christ, and is filled with Him who fills all in all.[5] It is the Bride of Christ, united with Him to form one personality analogous to the twofold unity of married life.[6]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 13. In this epistle, 'Church' occurs twenty-two times; but at most only four times in a non-particular sense. xv. 9 repeats Gal. i. 13. In x. 32 'the Church of God' seems to be as generic as the other two classes, Jews and Greeks. In xi. 22 the phrase may have only a local meaning. Even xii. 28 has been given a local interpretation.

[2] 'Church' is found nine times in 2 Cor. (singular once in address, eight times plural).

[3] In Rom. xvi. 16 we first meet the phrase 'Church of Christ'; previously we have found only Churches 'in Christ,' or 'of God.' *Philippians* uses the word twice, once locally, iv. 15, and once ('persecuting the Church,' iii. 6) non-locally. Philemon once and locally, ver 2.

[4] The word is used four times in Colossians, twice locally, twice of the universal body: nine times in Ephesians, never locally.

[5] Col. i. 18, 24; Eph. i. 22 f.

[6] Eph. v. 22-32. Usage in other parts of the N. T. may be mentioned here. In the pastoral Epistles 'Church' occurs thrice, twice possibly in a local, once surely in a universal sense, viz.: 1 Tim. iii. 15, 'the House of God is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.' *Hebrews*, in the phrase 'the general assembly and *Church* of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' (xii. 23), recalls the old *Qahal*. The only other instance of the word in this Epistle (ii. 12) is a quotation of Psalm xxii. 22, where *ekklesia*

Still, however various may be the degrees of explicitness in enunciating it, the idea of a universal Church, of which the local Churches form a part, is there in the New Testament. There, too, is the idea of the Kingdom. At once the question arises, How are these two ideas related to each other? How does Church stand to Kingdom and Kingdom to Church? Few inquiries affect more vitally the religious life of the day.

ii. General Relation of Church to Kingdom.

The first impulse in many minds has been to identify Kingdom and Church. Both have much in common. The conditions of entrance are the same in both (cf. Eph. ii. 19); Church and Kingdom are thus numerically co-extensive. The one as well as the other is a fellowship of souls; in both the Fatherhood and Brotherhood are realized in love. Both are destined to transcend the differences of race, culture, station and sex. Both acknowledge the Christ as Head. By these and other resemblances, Augustine was led to regard the Kingdom as identical with the

translates *qahal*. In *Acts* the word is used nineteen times of a Christian community, once of the O. T. *Qahal*, and twice of a municipal assembly: only once (xx. 28) out of the nineteen times has it a universal and non-local meaning. Yet the local term was expansive, could include the company of believers in countries as well as cities. Cf. Acts ix. 31, 'The Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria. In the Apocalypse, where it occurs twenty times, 'Church' is exclusively local. So probably in the single instance in *James* (v. 14), and the three cases in 3 *John* (6, 9, 10). The word is not so much as mentioned in first and second *John*, or in the Petrine Epistles.

Church. This conclusion was adopted from him by the Roman Catholic Church, but it is by no means restricted to Papal theologians.

But the equation asserted by this 'short and easy method' is not established. The presence of the two distinct terms in the New Testament suggests at the outset that they represent ideas which are distinct. Granted that the Church is almost absent from the sayings of our Lord, and that the Kingdom which is everywhere on His lips is rarely mentioned in the letters of Paul, the difference has deeper roots than are to be found in a choice between synonyms. For, though the Kingdom is more frequently mentioned by the Apostle as a future consummation than as a progressive realization, the present and actual Kingdom is alluded to in his writings (1 Cor. iv. 20; Rom. xiv. 17; cf. Col. iv. 11) side by side with the Church, and the two terms are scrupulously preserved from interchange or confusion (cf. Col. i. 13, 18).

To find the deep material differences corresponding to these formal distinctions, it is only necessary to recall the various phases and spheres of social life which earlier in the essay were shown to be taken up into the Kingdom. The home, the State, the economic system, the hygienic services, the fellowships of science and letters and art are forms or aspects of the Kingdom; only by violence to language can they be described as forms or aspects of the Church. They are organisms within the larger organism of the Kingdom: they cannot be said to be modes in which the Church organizes itself. A Christian may, for example, be father,

citizen, artizan, student of science, and churchman all in one. Each phase of his life is distinct from the rest; we may not confound his fatherhood with his churchmanship, though either may powerfully determine the other. But whether as father or as churchman, he is equally a subject of the Kingdom. His life with all its phases and functions is in the Kingdom. They are *species*, the Kingdom is *genus*. Thus, though the membership of the Church is numerically identical with the membership of the Kingdom, the Kingdom comprises a much greater complexity of relationship than does the Church. It embraces the Church along with all other normal societies. The Church is but one phase of the Kingdom.

What is that phase?

The distinction may be stated in the following terms: *The Church is the Kingdom in its phase of corporate self-consciousness and corporate self-actualization.*

1. *Analysis of the Distinction.*

The correctness of this description can best be shown by submitting it at once to the deductive test. It will yield, on analysis, the various characteristics known historically to belong to the Church, and to the Church alone. The Kingdom may, indeed, be said to be conscious of itself in the soul of the individual believer as he follows up the various lines of his life-work in the world. In doing his daily duty he knows that he is serving God. The Kingdom also actualizes itself intensively and extensively through

the appropriate behaviour of the individual in home and trade and politics and the other non-ecclesiastical spheres. But only in the Church does the Kingdom come to collective self-consciousness, and collectively as well as consciously actualize itself.

Corporate self-consciousness cannot be conceived of as dumb. It implies that members of the Kingdom are conscious each of the others as well as each of himself. This, in turn, requires that members express themselves as members so as to be known to fellow-members. That is to say, there must be self-avowal. But as the actualization of the Kingdom which is destined to be universal involves its continuous extension, the corporate self-extension, which our formula demands, requires more than the mutual self-avowal of members. If the world is to be won for the Kingdom by the corporate action of the members, they must avow themselves to the world. Their association must be vocal and explicit. Hence *confession* is a note of the Church. In it God bears witness to man and man to God. Delivered primarily to and by believing man, the witness passes from him as agent or medium to unbelieving man. The Church is thus the organized mouthpiece of the truths of the Kingdom. It bears living and articulate witness to the Fatherhood of God, to the brotherhood of man, to the Lordship of the Christ. It attests the saving deeds by which the Fellowship has been founded, ratified, extended. It declares the benefits experienced within the Kingdom, the grace of sins forgiven, of life renewed, of daily guidance, of filial intimacy

with God. It lays bare the processes whereby the Kingdom is pervading and subduing all forms of social and personal life. It is the custodian, therefore, and expositor of the records of the fontal Revelation. It is the living voice of the Word of God which came to prophet and apostle, and is embodied in the Christ. This collective confession is the business of no other community as it is of the Church.

But the Kingdom thus confessed is the fellowship of the Father and His children in Jesus the Christ, rendered explicit. In other words, the fellowship of the Kingdom raised to corporate self-consciousness becomes public *Communion*.[1] Of the two sides to this communion, the Divine is the primary and originative, the human the derived and responsive. As God gives the Kingdom so He creates the Church. The Church as institution is God's act before it is man's. It is God's invitation to men to come to Him together. Their answer to the invitation is social *worship*. The Church is still the worshipping assembly (*Qahal*); but under the New Covenant the Spirit of the Father is so wrapped up with the spirit of His children, as to require that He should never be addressed in the Church except in ways likely at once to benefit them. The early Churches were bidden firmly to subordinate the impulse of worship to the main end of transforming and building up of character (1 Cor. xiv.). '*Let all things be done unto edifying*,' is the reiterated plea of the Apostle, when issuing instructions for the conduct of public

[1] The ecclesiastical connotation of the word justifies us in restricting 'Communion' to this special kind of fellowship.

worship (verses 5, 12, 19, 26); and he reckoned that to edify is also to evangelize (verse 25). It is highly significant that the chief ministers of the Church whom he enumerates—Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—are not so much officers of worship as agents for promoting or producing Christian character. The Kingdom self-conscious is the Kingdom intensified; and to intensify a fellowship of Christlike love to God and man is necessarily to make it self-extensive. *Edification* and *evangelism* are the inevitable outcome, as they form the principal aim of Christian confession and communion (cf. Mark iii. 14, 15; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

2. *The Sacraments.*

In the two *sacraments* the life and activity of the Church as the self-realized life and activity of the Kingdom are symbolically summed up and displayed. Baptism is the sacrament of evangelism. The Eucharist is the sacrament of edification. And both are acts of confession and communion. Both recall the Sacrifice which at once cleft and bridged the chasm between world and Kingdom. The baptismal water suggests the border-stream of self-negation—the death to self which was accomplished for humanity at Golgotha, but which every unit of humanity that would enter the Kingdom must himself pass through (Rom. vi. 3 ff.). The emblems of the Body and Blood attest the New Covenant by which believers become alike in His death and in His life incorporate with the Christ (1 Cor. x. 16 f.; xi. 24, 25;

Rom. vi. 5-11). Cut aloof (as signalized by baptism) from the social organism of sin—having *put off the body of the flesh*[1]— they are engrafted into the Body of Christ.[2] And the Eucharist is the standing reminder that the Life which was poured forth on the Cross now flows through them, 'cleansing'[3] and 'carrying away'[4] all their impurities, replacing the old moral tissue with the new,[5] and steadily 'building up' the Holy Organism into the symmetry and stability of completed growth (Eph. iv. 13-16).

3. *The Officers of the Church.*

The self-realization of the Kingdom, which is thus symbolized demands, moreover, that the Church be provided with *officers;* for apart from personal fitness and personal responsibility it is difficult to see how the offices of the Church could be maintained, either in efficiency or permanency. But as to the number, rank, and specific functions of these officers Scripture has uttered no final word. There is probably not a single Church-order in existence which exactly reproduces all the functionaries mentioned in the New Testament. Even Congregationalists, whose avowed endeavour is to reproduce the polity mirrored in the Gospel and Epistles, have set up a one-man ministry, to which the New Testament furnishes no clear precedent. The absorption in a single officer of the functions of the presbyters or bishops who were at first appointed in each local Church, is an early product of the same extra-scriptural development,

[1] Col. ii. 11 f. [2] Cf. Rom. xi. 17-24; John xv.
[3] 1 John i. 7. [4] John i. 29. [5] Col. iii. 5-11.

which later produced the Diocesan Episcopate, and finally the Papacy. On the other hand, not even the most rigid Christian hierarchies have denied themselves the liberty of creating new offices and orders to meet new needs. As might indeed have been expected, the Church, sent to realize a progressive Kingdom in a changing world, is left free to employ such and so many kinds of servants as the work of the hour demands. Decisive guidance is supplied not by what prevailed in any one century, but by the unceasing twofold pressure of the inward Spirit and the outward need. So impelled, the Church, which began (Mark iii. 14) with the single order of the Apostolate, has gone on developing through the ages a quite indefinite number and variety of forms of ministry. It would be no easy task to count or classify the army of Christian workers to-day, who all, from Leo the Thirteenth down to the rawest recruit in General Booth's Salvage Brigade, can lay claim incontrovertible to the title of officers and ministers of the Church. Certain offices, indeed, such as the Congregational Episcopate or the Diocesan Episcopate, have shown a remarkable persistence; but this is not of itself sufficient to establish their permanent validity. It only entitles them to respectful examination. They must first meet the challenge, Are they in harmony with the Spirit of the Kingdom and with the rights which are involved in the duties of its subjects? And then comes the further inquiry: Supposing they in no way offend the conscience of the Kingdom, are the conditions to-day so exact a repetition of the conditions

which first evoked and maintained these offices, as to demand their exact reproduction? Or is not a modification of the offices in accordance with modern needs the more probable requisite? These are questions which dogmatism cannot answer. They can only be answered by the practical reason of the Spirit-led Church.

4. *The Charter of the Church.*

For the Church is no mechanical reproduction or mechanical continuation of ancient precedent. As the concentrated and organized vitality of the Kingdom, it ought to be the one thing most intensely alive. It is actualized religion. It is living Communion. In it continually are found the invitation and presence of God, the responsive presence and worship of man; acceptance on the part of God, consequent assurance on the part of man; instruction, direction or command given by God, filial docility and obedience shown by man; out-pouring of the life of God, impletion of self-emptied man. God and man realize their unity afresh in the Christ, and of the organism thus constituted the Holy Spirit is the pervading life. The Church is, in a word, 'the Body of Christ.' The redemptive and mediatorial purpose incarnate in Him is incorporate in it. He came expressly to establish and to extend the Kingdom. The Church lives expressly for the same end. *As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world* (John xvii. 18; xx. 21); and the same Voice has said, *The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost* (Luke xix. 10). The

later record runs: *The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world* (1 John iv. 14). This then is the avowed vocation of the Church. Here all the characteristics we have noted are focussed. The Church is the organized Saviour. It is God's implement for overtly and directly bringing over the world into the realm of 'saving health.' It is to search for the lost. It is to save them. It is to make them whole. It is to integrate humanity.

This is the Charter of the Church. The duties it imposes and the powers it confers fall within no narrow or rigid limits. The Church is the only social engine whose exclusive and explicit aim it is to actualize the Kingdom; and its energies may have to be applied to any one of the indefinitely numerous phases in which the Kingdom exists. The Kingdom is the salvation or integration of humanity; and wherever normal processes fail of their salutary or integrating effect, there the help of the Church is required. It may have to assume any or every function known to the Kingdom.

5. *Supplemental Functions of the Church.*

Where the element of Home is lacking, the Church may not seldom be required to supply it. Thus it has made provision for the absolutely homeless in foundling hospitals, Barnardo homes, Müller orphanages, rescue homes, free shelters, almshouses, and the like. For the comparatively homeless young men and young women in lodgings or in the overcrowded dwellings of the poor it has devised the social aid of Guilds, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., polytechnics, Christian

hostelries, etc. The desolate, even when not destitute, it has gathered into social residence. Protestant Churches would do well to copy the virtues without the vices of the conventual system so far as to open houses of Christian service for celibates and solitaries, as well as to afford to penitent shame in every rank secluded and restorative society.

The Church has had again and again to supplement the State. To the idea of international unity, which is prominent in the Kingdom of God, the Church has borne frequent and effective witness. When the world-unifying power of ancient Rome had left behind nothing but a pale ghost of itself, the Church, through the mediæval Papacy, gave something like political unity to Christendom. And it is the proper function of the Church to-day in its collective might to demand the cessation of war, the promotion of amity between the peoples and the establishment of international tribunals. The readiness with which even Protestant powers submit disputes to the arbitrament of the Pope suggests the enormous influence which the federated Church of entire Christendom might wield as the umpire of God among the nations, and as the upholder of His peace (cf. Isa. ii. 1 ff.). The Church may be led to realize a civic ideal as in the Geneva of Calvin, or may become a State-founding agency, as in the case of New England Pilgrims and Pennsylvanian Quakers. It may become the punitive and constructive organ of a disordered and tyrannous State, as of England under the Stuarts; for Cromwell and his Ironsides were Church not less than army. It may thus

experimentally introduce into the political world institutions like modern democracy; for the English and American Revolutions were precedent and pattern of all that was best in the French. At the present time the Church seems called in all democratic lands to organize itself as spiritual counterpart to the various gradations of government. Alongside of every political body representative of the mass of the electorate is required an ecclesiastical advisory body representative of the Christ, to watch and suggest and guide political conduct. Entirely without coercive powers, without one shred of legal connection with the State, the Church, so organized, would exercise a weighty if not invariably a decisive influence in the choice of public men and measures. It would be the corporate and articulate conscience of the State; though, like the conscience and unlike the State, it would have no policeman or hangman behind it.

The Economic system has also experienced the direct and salutary intervention of the Church. Monastic companies were in many regions pioneers of agriculture and of other civilized industries. The servile stain which had once attached to labour was removed by the manual toil of holy monks. In the foreign mission-field to-day the Church is a not less important economic agent. Its 'inner mission,' too, leads it to form labour bureaux for the unemployed, to encourage home-colonization, and to assist emigration. Its leading representatives have intervened as mediators in the strife between employers and employed, not rarely with most happy results. It is

quite conceivable that in a strike of weak and unskilled workers against an unscrupulous and overbearing gang of capitalists, who refused to their employés the simplest human rights, the leagued Churches of the neighbourhood might be called to support the cause of the oppressed with counsel and with cash. Similarly the suggestion has been made that Churches should unite to 'run' a model factory —as great landlords run a model farm—and practically demonstrate how labour and capital ought to be employed.

How the Church has helped to integrate humanity in the departments of science, letters, and art, is known to every, even the most careless, reader of history. Something of the same story is repeated to-day, wherever the frontier of the Kingdom is being pushed forward among the heathen. The Church is school and college as well as pioneer of industry. Even at home there are forms of culture that sadly need the saving aid of the Church. Where, for example, a whole neighbourhood is being demoralized by a journalism that fills its columns with betting news and with reports of brutality and obscenity, the Church might well strengthen the local forces of salvation by founding and maintaining a newspaper which should be clean and sane and healthy, without being necessarily incurably dull. The Church that planted and endowed universities to dissipate the intellectual darkness of bygone times, might render saving service to the modern multitude by similarly applying its resources to the newspaper, which is the university of the average man. *The* newspaper of

the town, the shire, the country might fitly be financed and directed by the associated Churches of the respective areas. The printing press has not yet been half utilized for the Kingdom. The Religious Tract Society has done good work; but the best religious tract society would be a syndicate of the Churches conducting a Christian daily newspaper, which in capital, enterprise, world-wide interest, and brains surpassed the *Daily Chronicle*, and in circulation the *Daily Telegraph*.

The health of the human body is another interest which has required reinforcement by the Church. The Church is the mother of our hospitals. Hospital Sunday represents an important ecclesiastical function to-day. Medical missions have done much for evangelism at home and abroad. In order to secure the proper sanitation of the dwellings of the poor, local Churches have been known to unite in a Christian Ratepayers' Association, which has brought righteous pressure to bear on lethargic sanitary authorities. Similarly, where the life of the people lacks brightness and colour or outlet for exuberant spirits, it may be the duty of the Church, in default of other agencies, to provide for recreation. To entertain and instruct the people in mediæval times, the Church introduced miracle-plays, and so originated the modern drama; and the Rev. Dr. Stuckenberg, in his *Christian Sociology*, gravely proposes that the theatre should be taken over by the Church to-day.

It is a simple matter of history that the Church has been called to come to the help of these non-ecclesiastical phases of the Kingdom; and he would be a

bold man who dared to say that in all, or in most instances, the Church was not called of God. The emphasis previously laid on the revelatory significance of the general evolution of the Kingdom surely belongs not less to its ecclesiastical evolution. Criticize and discriminate as we may, our trust in the order of Providence forbids us to regard the Church's action in other spheres as illegitimate.[1]

Within the strictly ecclesiastical sphere, the versatility and adaptiveness of the Church in executing its integrative mission is attested by the vast number of religious orders and denominations. Each order within a given communion, or each separate denomination, has arisen to minister to some neglected phase of human integration. So when some duty needs special enforcement, a special organization springs up to meet the need. Faced with the appalling prevalence of drunkenness, unchastity, gambling, the Church develops its temperance societies, its White-Cross armies, its anti-gambling crusades. The only limit to this kind of social innervation, is that other parts of the saving organism are not robbed of their requisite nerve-force and that the true balance of energy is never lost.

This glance over what may be termed the *supplemental* functions of the Church historically confirms

[1] The intervention of the Church in non-ecclesiastical spheres was felt in Reformation-times to be a curse, because, though originally wholesome, it had hardened into institutions which remained after need for it had ceased. The source of evil was not the primary intervention, but the lack of elasticity in the idea and organization of the Church. It is the duty of the Church to drop every supplemental function the moment it becomes obsolete.

our conception of its general mission. The Church is to become *all things to all men*, with a view to their salvation (1 Cor. ix. 22, 23). It has to supply every lack which cannot otherwise be better supplied, and which hinders the complete development of man. The Church is, so to speak, the life-blood of the Christ transfused into the veins of humanity, which hurries to every spot where there is lesion or strain or other demand, which builds up the needed tissue, and which promotes the equal development of the entire social frame. An extraordinary fluidity of life is consequently required in the Church. With an ever-changing world and an ever-expanding humanity before it, the Church must possess a weariless inventiveness, a faculty of endless initiative, a genius for plastic adaptiveness and self-adjustment, and *the wisdom which is from above.* To reduce the idea to the simplest Saxon, the Church is God's handy-man. The same thought may be expressed in less colloquial English as the doctrine of the Motherhood of the Church.

6. *Development by Devolution.*

But when the various communities which have been mothered by the Church grow up towards maturity, they relieve it of many of its earlier and supplemental duties. The evolution of the Kingdom is marked by an increasing differentiation of functions. At first, amid mediæval darkness, or in heathen lands to-day, the Church assumes well-nigh all the phases of the Kingdom. And at the beginning of each new era, where rules break down and

precedents fail, the supplemental expansion of the Church's mission is again required. Such an epoch is upon us now. But as the Kingdom advances beyond these germinal periods, its phases become more distinct, its social structures more self-dependent, and the direct aid of the Church is less needed.

This does not mean that the other communities, as they advance, in any way abrogate or absorb the Church as a distinct organization. Far from it. Rather does the relegation of its supplemental duties to other and special social organs fling into strong relief what may in contradistinction be called the *central* duties of the Church. For example, so long as there are persons outside the Kingdom, persons within the Kingdom must continue of set purpose to bring the aliens in. Evangelism presupposes Church. If we suppose a time when all men have entered the Kingdom, and all forms of society are subsumed under the Kingdom, even then, and in greater glory than ever, there must be Church. For the Kingdom will still require an organ of corporate self-consciousness and corporate self-actualization. Evangelism may have passed away, but the need of mutual edification is as endless as the infinite progress of man. Members of the Kingdom will then more eagerly than formerly assemble for communion, to worship and to receive the answer of acceptance, to consult God and to be directed by Him, to realize their corporate life in Him. Of these functions no society can relieve the Church.

7. The Church a Phase of Other Communities.

At the same time it must be remembered that the Church is a phase of the Kingdom, not merely in its totality, but in each of the various communities which the Kingdom includes. In family worship, or where the household consults together for the direct extension of the Kingdom, the Kingdom becomes corporately conscious of itself, and corporately promotes its own realization. To that extent Home becomes Church. A village council, a town council, even a parliament may some day engage in acts of sincere and unanimous and representative worship or religious deliberation. To that extent the State, local or national as the case may be, will become Church, without ceasing to be State, and distinct from Church in other functions—as for example, in levying compulsory taxes. Economic fellowship used in the old Guilds to become a worshipping assembly, and was, so far forth, Church ; and the same thing occurs to-day, where workers in a given factory preface and conclude their day's work with prayer. So with other phases of association.

Our general conception of the Church—of its relation to the Kingdom and to other communities within the Kingdom—thus appears to commend itself historically and prospectively. It would have been easy to formulate an idea of the Church according to *à priori* or dogmatic standards, and then to reject as illegitimate everything in Church history which did not square with it. But any rational

notion of the functions of the Church must keep in view what the Church has actually done and may be required to do again; and it must exclude nothing which has contributed or may contribute to the ordered evolution of the Kingdom. This is the principle on which the formula given above has been framed and tested.

iii. The Polity of the Church.

In the light of what has gone before, we now proceed to consider the antitheses of the Church visible and invisible, œcumenical and local, and to investigate the question of *polity*. The idea of the Church invisible is given in the idea of the universal Kingdom. The Kingdom of God which appeared on earth with Jesus exists also in other spheres of the universe. It is in heaven. Wherever created spirits yield obedience to their Creator, there the Kingdom is. But wheresoever the Kingdom is, there must be in some sense social worship. And the Church invisible may be described as the universal Kingdom of spirits in their relation of explicit communion with God.

1. *Unity and Visibility.*

The Church on earth consists of all members of the Kingdom on earth, so far as they constitute the corporate self-consciousness and corporate self-actualization of the Kingdom. As the human subjects of the terrene kingdom are visible persons, their confession, communion and common effort to save and

edify mankind, involve the *visibility*[1] of the Church on earth. But the essential *unity* of the Church in every area is given in the unity of the Kingdom, and this unity likewise obtains within the terrene limits. Thus the Church on earth is one and visible. The unity, itself necessarily invisible, becomes apparent in certain visible and audible acts. These no part of the earthly Church, even amid the wildest diversities, has ever wholly lacked. Always, everywhere and in all sections of the Church there has been the confession by assembled Christians that *Jesus Christ is Lord* (1 Cor. xii. 3; Rom. x. 9.; Phil. ii. 11). This is the 'one clear note' which sounds on all the 'diverse strings.' The common invocation of God as Father, and the common declaration in some form or other of the forgiveness of sins, are similarly public and universal. Observance of the two sacraments is doubtless designed to be the sensible sign of œcumenical unity; and only in a few great instances has the design been frustrated. The repetition of the Lord's Prayer tends to become a universal mark of Christian worship. There is scarcely a communion which does not in some manner patent to the senses employ the Holy Scriptures. Certain hymns are fast assuming the character of œcumenical symbols. By signs which tend towards universality, as well as by signs actually universal, the oneness of the Church terrestrial is already sensibly displayed.

Ecclesiastical feuds may cast a shadow over the manifestation of unity, but they have never effaced

[1] In this connection 'visible' stands by synecdoche for 'perceptible to the senses.'

or suppressed it. They belong not to the Church as Church, they betray the unholy powers of the world working in the Church. With the advance of the Kingdom they fall off or are cast out. In these days of toleration, 'the old leaven' appears as a refusal to recognise sister Churches—Romanist unchurching Anglican, and Anglican Nonconformist. This is treason to the fellowship of the Kingdom; but its modern mildness, compared with the sanguinary ferocity of the seventeenth century, shows how in the Church, as elsewhere, Kingdom is conquering world. Were this bad relic dropped, its absence would reveal the existing unity—without any attempt being made at further unification—as most impressive.

But further unification is increasingly sought after. Joint action by the Churches in philanthropic movements, overtures of federation between the Free Churches, projects of reunion between the old-world communions, are among a host of sensible signs, the import of which cannot be mistaken. The inner oneness of life already partially displayed, is bound outwardly to demonstrate itself with irresistible cogency. This is what our Lord prayed for (John xvii. 20-23). When He besought His Father that those who believe on Him should *all be one, be perfected into one*, He was not asking for the internal unity which is coincident with the very fact of believing on Him. His request was for a unity which was the result of a perfecting process, and which was so luminously and incontrovertibly evident as to convince the world of His Divine mission: *that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me*. The problem before the Church

to-day is to find out the way leading to a visible and organic union, which shall give free play to the spontaneous initiative and boundless diversity of fresh life that God is ever calling forth. Some glimpse of a possible solution may be won by a glance at the relation which should normally prevail between the whole and the parts of the terrene Church.

2. *Congregational Independency.*

It is obvious that the Church on earth, though one body, cannot meet together in a single assembly. Existing in different places, the one Church must meet in separate parts and appear as a multitude of distinct communities or congregations. The local Church is a necessary form of the Church terrestrial. The corporate self-realization of the Kingdom within the local area is present in the local Church, as of the earthly Kingdom in the earthly Church, and of the universal kingdom in the Church invisible. And since both Church and Kingdom are organisms, the life in the lesser space is suffused with the fulness of the living whole. In each local Church, therefore, communion is, ideally, complete. The Christ organizes and reveals Himself through His local members: '*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst*' (Matt. xviii. 20), and in Him they are complete. Concerning the completeness or validity of most phases of local communion, there is probably almost universal agreement. No one seriously doubts that in the local Church the Divine invitation is there in its fulness, as also the

possibility of genuine worshipping response; or that there the acceptance by God reveals itself in the answer of peace; or that there evangelism may be carried on with saving power. But one aspect of local communion Congregationalists (including of course the Baptists) have alone, among the historic Churches dared to uphold in its completeness. It is of the essence of communion that the Will of God imprint itself on the will of man with sovereign freedom; that the Most High not merely convey His general purposes, but also impart special guidance. To the assembly seeking counsel of God, definite instructions are given; and an obedience not less definite is required. The Christ is present in authority as well as in sympathy, not merely to comfort but to command. This authoritative initiative is an element indispensable to communion, and to the full extent of its infinite possibilities must be allowed for in the local Church. Every system which does not so provide for it, which does not grant the local assembly freedom to receive and obey the specific behests of the Lord, mutilates the idea of communion. It virtually aspires to limit the Divine freedom. It tries to gag the Christ. For each local Church is prophet as well as priest, and it must possess the liberty of the prophet both to say and to do.

This condition is scarcely less essential to the general progress of the Kingdom than to the integrity of local communion. Endless suggestions of fresh effort from the central Initiative of the universe are an indispensable factor in the salvation

of the world. And they require a mouthpiece, an implement, a demonstrator. But as they vary in different lands and in different stages of culture, they cannot always be supposed to come simultaneously to the entire œcumenical Church. Historically, they have come to the local Church ; and reverence, not less than reason, forbids any bar to their being straightway promulgated or realized. If the nameless group of Cyprian and Cyrenæan believers at Antioch (Acts xi. 20 f.), or, in more recent times, if the Pilgrim Fathers, had not used their right of free local initiative, Christendom would have been in strange plight to-day. The Captain of the Lord's host must always be able to detach and despatch on special errands any portion of His forces, however small it may be, or whatever the rest of the army may think about it. The local freedom or, to use the historic term, the Independency, which is thus ensured, helps to promote that fluidity of energy and that ready re-adaptation of methods which are essential to the Church's all-sided task of saving the world.

3. *Congregational Catholicity.*

But local freedom does not mean œcumenical chaos. Just as we have learned that the liberty of the individual promotes the integrity of the State, just as we have seen one of the compactest commonwealths of time formed by the union of free States, so men are beginning to learn that Independency in the ecclesiastical sphere is not inimical, but decidedly favourable, to wider union. The twin principle to the

Independence of local Churches is their Interdependence, and though the first has won greater historical emphasis than the second, both are integral elements in the Congregational idea. Within the denomination co-operative union is growing; and in movements that aim at bringing other British Churches into closer association, Congregationalists have taken a leading part. The first Free Church Congress (held in 1892) contained a majority of Congregationalists: and the wider Reunion Conferences at Grindelwald owed much to modern representatives of the Elizabethan separatists.

Of the rival watchwords of Reunion—Absorption and Federation—the latter alone can appeal to Independents, and they have not been slow in making public their choice. First among the œcumenical assemblies of Christendom, the International Congregational Council of 1891 adopted the formula of Free Fraternal Federation as the key to Christian union.[1] This formula suggests the Congregational theory of a corporate and visible Catholic Church. Independency is the assertion of a Christocracy, which, considered as a human phenomenon, is democracy. Interdependence reappears with a stronger accent as Federation. Taken together they furnish the principle on which Congregationalists seem to be willing to construct an organized œcumenical Church—the

[1] The words of the resolution submitted July 20th, are: "That for the better manifestation of the unity of the Church of Christ throughout the world, the International Council of Congregational Churches will heartily welcome a fraternal federation, without authority, of all Christian bodies at such early date as the providence of God will permit."

principle, namely, of Federated Democracies. But, as was shown above, that appears to be the plan which Providence approves for making mankind one commonwealth. The coincidence of the civil and ecclesiastical ideals is confirmatory of both.

Putting the two schemes side by side we perceive more readily the polity of Congregational Catholicity. The sole and sufficient condition of membership in the Church is a person's credible confession of his life-purpose to follow the Christ at all risks and at all costs. This ensures for him the ecclesiastical franchise. All thus enfranchised in a given village or town or neighbourhood would together constitute the communal unit of the Church Catholic—the village, town, or District Church. In all purely local affairs, the local Church would possess every power and function which the strictest Independent could claim for it. Being essentially Christonomous, it would in its human aspect be autonomous. This is logically and historically the initial grade of Church government. Then comes the wider area of, let us say, the county or large town. The local Churches within it have their mutual relations, and there is much other ecclesiastical business, common to the whole county but peculiar to no District Church. This common business would be the concern of a federation of the local Churches—let us call it the County or Civic Church. Oversight of the ecclesiastical business of the nation would fall to a federation of county Churches,—let it be styled the National Church. A Race-Church or federation of constituent national Churches would similarly conduct the

ecclesiastical business of the entire race—English, German, Slavonic, or what not. These Race-Churches federated would constitute the œcumenical Church. There would almost certainly be intermediate groupings and cross-federations, but the principle of federated democracies is elastic enough to admit of the inclusion of all such cases in the organized whole. Each member of the ascending order of self-governed and federated communities would be autonomous in its own sphere, and would avoid trenching on the autonomy of the grades above and below it.

This forecast of œcumenical union is not, of course, presented as an estimate of speedily verifiable probabilities. It will be fulfilled, if at all, by slow and unobtrusive stages. The eventual will creep in under the existing, and for long leave venerable names and semblances unchanged. The first steps are apparent in the fusion of kindred denominations. Next and largely synchronous will be what the Americans call by the tremendous name of 'interdenominational federation,' which may be both local and national.[1] Relations with the Sacerdotal Churches bid fair to begin on the semi-neutral ground of what we have

[1] Of the way in which the federative ideal will steal into local life without upsetting present denominational differences, a striking illustration is furnished by the Free Church parish movement in Bradford. The local Nonconformist Churches have united to discharge one of the most important functions of the Town Church; they have allotted a district to each local congregation, with a view to bringing every home in the town into personal touch with the Church. They have really formed themselves into a Civic Church of the federal-democratic kind described above; yet all denominational names and connections have been maintained intact.

termed the supplemental work of the Church. Fellowship in human service may be expected to pave the way to ecclesiastical concert, mutual recognition, union.

But amid all consolidation of Christian forces and fresh grouping of Churches, the autonomy of the local fellowship in its own sphere must be ungrudgingly conceded. Only by the full freedom of each part can the Church, as a whole, maintain the elasticity and versatility which is essential to its redemptive mission. Only by thus inviting the inspiration of Him who is the Source of infinite diversity and the Soul of eternal initiative can the πολυποίκιλος σοφία of God be made known through the Church (Eph. iii. 10).

VIII.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

ELKANAH ARMITAGE.

Christian Missions.

THE command which Christ gave to His followers after His resurrection, that they should go and make disciples of all the nations, was understood by them to be as definite and binding as was the command which He had given them during His earthly ministry to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel preaching the Kingdom of Heaven. It was plainly His intention that the Gospel should be preached to the whole creation, and His commands on this subject at the close of His earthly life were illustrated and enforced for the twelve by their memory of all His sojourn amongst them.

Foreign missions were therefore undertaken by the Church at its very foundation. They entered into its constitution and scheme, and they have held a central place in its life, in proportion as it has understood what spirit it was of. But just as it was at the direct bidding of Christ, in the first instance, that the disciples bent to the difficult task of preaching the Kingdom to the reluctant cities and villages of their own land, so in the long centuries since it has been supremely in obedience to a direct command that the Church has published Christ's name throughout the world. At His word it has gone forth into strange

lands, not knowing whither it went, and has engaged in vast enterprises without first counting the cost. There have indeed been motives of mercy in the heart of the Church, and there has been some perception at least of the universal significance of the truth which it had received, but, whatever considerations of this kind there may have been, they did not supply the great effective motive which served to thrust out the labourers into the harvest. That motive has supremely been one of implicit and worshipful obedience to One whose commands have been at once the law and the gospel of the Church.

It is impossible to give any account of the rise of the Christian Church without recognizing the all-mastering impression which was made upon the disciples by the personality of Jesus. It is impossible to explain the subsequent history of Christendom without recognizing that that personality has remained the supreme factor through it all. Simon spoke not only for the twelve, but also for all the centuries of those who have believed through their word, when he answered the searching question, "Would ye also go away?" with the words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God." Jesus held a supreme place in the thought and in the reverence of the early Church. At a very early moment the belief was affirmed in a Father, Son, and Spirit, and although beneath this agreement there were wide theological differences of view, and although in especial there were differences of view regarding the Son, it was

never pretended by any sect in the first three centuries that Jesus had been a mere man. There had come to earth—so the Church believed—the Son who had been with the Father ; there had become flesh and dwelt amongst men the Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, which was God. And with this great faith there entered a regulative principle into all the life and thought of those who accepted it, for whilst a new stimulus was given to the reason and the judgment, and a new scope to liberty, the mind that must be formed and enlarged in Christian believers was the mind of Christ, and the will thus to be emboldened and fortified was the will of their Lord. They distrusted and eschewed every principle of action that was not consciously submitted to His control. Even the guidance of conscience must be continually tested by this objective standard, for though a Christian might know nothing against himself, he was not thereby justified. He that would judge him was the Lord.

It was in this spirit that the apostles entered on the work of preaching the Gospel in heathen lands. Paul designates himself a bond-servant of Jesus Christ in the opening words of his Epistle to the Romans, and it is only in the obedience and in the confidence of a bond-servant that he bears his Master's message beyond the limits of Jewry, and dares to summon the imperial races of the West to bend their knees at the name of Jesus. It has been in this spirit that faithful apostles of Jesus Christ have gone forth into all lands since Paul's day, and it is in this spirit that they must go out still. Not all the

conquests which the Gospel has made during all these later centuries can furnish a motive that may take its place. No vindication of its heavenly origin which has been given will answer the doubts and fears that rise in men's hearts as difficulty and opposition face them. For the opposition wears an ever new and more threatening aspect, and the doubt speaks to each generation in the language of its own science and philosophy. The faithful Church of Christ must therefore still tread the way of humble obedience, and must still find its confidence in casting upon its Lord the responsibility of His own commands. By faith it must go out into heathendom, not knowing whither it goeth, sure only that it is obeying the will of God. Like Abraham it must be a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not its own; dwelling in tents, until, in the covenant of God's promise, it shall receive that land for an inheritance. In the future, as in the past, the Church must understand that humble obedience has the solution of many a difficulty which is insoluble to speculation, and that the vindication of God's will can only be seen after the doing of it.

It will be the object of this essay to show that whilst the Church is called upon to carry forward with greater devotion than ever the work of making disciples of all the nations, the character of the work and of the motives in which it must be done are, in the main, unchanged, and that the words which Jesus addressed to the trembling sister of Lazarus are those which He addresses to His timid Church to-day: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou

wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Christianity is but one of the missionary religions that is pressing forward to convert the world, but it is by far the greatest of them, whether regard be had to its achievements or to its ambition. It has travelled further and faster than any other; it has rooted more deeply in new soil, and fruited more plentifully; it is the most free to travel further again, and most fit to thrive in every climate. No impartial student of its past can doubt that there must be a great future before it, and no intelligent observer of the world to-day will deny that the near future will see its enormous expansion.

A strong plant seeds itself; leaven works in the lump. Let Christianity be sincere, and it will prove contagious; it will diffuse itself without the set effort and design of Christians. Happily there is a measure in which this is the case to-day. The leaven of Christianity is active in the leavened bread of Christian civilization and works in societies of men, whether at home or abroad. Many of the institutions which Englishmen carry to India or Africa have been moulded by Christ's hand and carry in them His healing touch. The married and home life of Englishmen preach a gospel; so does their pure literature, their commercial integrity, their private and professional honour, and the ethical standard which is ordinarily current among them. And when there is the salt of real Christianity in them, its savour is further found in the love and

service of men to which it moves them, and in the beauty and excellence of character which they display. The Gospel wins its way in the hearts of all observers when the followers of Christ let their light shine before men. They become an Epistle of Christ, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Herein lies the strength of the argument of those who are more anxious to see England made truly Christian than to see it sending missionaries abroad; and if it were possible by any concentration of energy upon our own land to make it altogether such a people as the Lord God could dwell in and walk in, it might be wise to contemplate such a course. But it is not thus that men or nations make advance in the Divine life, and the effect upon England itself of any such self-concentration would inevitably be disastrous. It was far otherwise that Christ trained His church in its infancy. Two and two did He send forth His disciples into aggressive work, whilst yet they were spelling over the very alphabet of truth, and were disputing one with another which of them should be the greatest. And if this argument against missions had been admitted by the Church, it would have prevented aggressive work in every century.

The plant which Christ set in the earth must not therefore be left to spread by its own spontaneous increase. For there are other plants in the soil and these also are seeding themselves: there is other leaven at work in the lump than that of the Kingdom of Heaven. The ground must be cleared:

every plant which the Father planted not must be rooted up. The leaven of malice and wickedness must be purged out, that men may eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Christ therefore, in the most binding and explicit manner, committed to His disciples the task of preaching the Gospel which He had brought. All His own teaching of the people was but to serve as the beginning and the pattern of a world-embracing enterprise upon which He sent forth His followers. By example, as by precept, He made the disciples understand His will, for He carried them with Him on rounds of untiring ministry, and they saw how His great purpose embraced the Samaritan as truly as the Jew; the Greek, the Roman, and Phœnician, as truly as the Hebrew race. They could not forget that His command to teach and baptize all nations was uttered in full view of the many different peoples that met in Palestine in His day, in full view of the European races, as well as of the Oriental. The command was solemnly given to the infant Church on several occasions. Christ gave it to the twelve, and organized and watched over them in its discharge; He then appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before His face, and taught them to pray that yet more labourers might be sent into the harvest, because the harvest was plenteous and the labourers were few. He repeated His command to the apostles in that thrilling hour upon Olivet, ere the cloud received Him out of their sight, ordaining them to be His witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and

Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And finally, when one born out of due time and not counting himself worthy to be called an apostle beheld the Lord, it was that he might be made a chosen vessel unto the Lord to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the Children of Israel. The whole record, therefore, which the early Church preserved of the life and sayings of Jesus, presented as vital and central this explicit command that the gospel of salvation which He had brought must be proclaimed by His disciples throughout the whole world.

But how unparalleled, how impossible a task was this! How disproportionate to the resources of that handful of unlettered men who returned from Olivet to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, or even of that larger company that later gathered together with the apostles, about a hundred and twenty in number. There, in common accord of prayer, they remembered the command which their Lord had laid upon them, and they waited for that solemn ordination for the task of which He had spoken to them. And well might they wait. The world stretched its dense empires around them out beyond the reach of their furthest thought, or the computation of their arithmetic. To East and West, to North and South, there lay the lands of harsh masters, who in turn had riveted their yoke on Jewish necks, and who in pride and scorn would refuse proffers of service and instruction from their victims.

Truly the world offered a harsh field for the seed

that they were bidden sow in it. Its frosts would chill the earliest shoots, its blighting winds would wilt the plant! What fitness could they discern in Christ's maxims of gentleness and love for the rough warring world about them? Some hundred millions of men crowded the lands known to their Roman masters, and they filled the world with the noise of strife and passion. Rome only kept the peace by its overawing legions, and by the terror of its ruthless vengeance on offenders. Was this a world in which to preach their gentle Master's word, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"? The race for wealth, the greed for pleasure, the savage impatience of control had now overthrown the virtues and the simplicity of an earlier time. Would their proclamation of a Heavenly Kingdom win a hearing from such sordid men? Could the purity of inmost thought which Christ enjoined ever be the holy aspiration of the effeminate Greek or of the polluted Asiatic? Verily the Master had laid upon His disciples a task beyond all their powers if not beyond all their thought and hope. No generous impulses within their hearts could furnish an adequate motive for work so impossible as this. Men will do much for love, and good men there are who are elect to love, and whose hearts are larger and fuller than their fellows'. But love's stores may fail if love be not sustained by a deep faith that it is but the exponent of a quenchless love beyond, and a divine purpose of good. The men, moreover, to whom Christ gave His command, were far from being perfected in love. Their sympathies

were narrow, their outlook on life was parochial, their prejudices were deep. Christ did not, therefore, rest weight on the generous feelings towards mankind which might be within them; He enjoined them by their obedience and fidelity to Himself to carry the Gospel abroad. And if the Church of Christ in later days had suffered its love for the world to fix the limits of its missionary labour, those limits would have been narrow indeed, and the garner of God would be empty of sheaves from the wide field. The love has followed the service rather than led it; it has come as the reward for ministry, rather than been the incentive to it. William Carey wrote in his diary on his way to India, "I have reason to lament over a barrenness of soul, and am sometimes much discouraged. For if I am so dead and stupid, how can I expect to be of any use among the heathen?"

And if no emotions of pity or desire could have availed to send the disciples of Christ forth in every age to preach the Gospel, far less would any perceptions of the intrinsic value of Christianity ever have done so. Such perceptions might make advocates who would earnestly and eloquently plead their cause under congenial circumstances; they would never make bond-servants of Jesus Christ, who would not count their lives dear unto them so that they might accomplish the ministry which they had received from Him. A preaching which finds its mainspring in the preacher's sense of the truth and beauty of Christianity is too personal, too purely subjective, to bear the strain of the world's opposition. It leaves the preacher, moreover, the creature of his own

moods: strong with their strength, and weak with their faintness. Still more does it leave him the victim of the argument that all truth has only a relative value, and that one man's food is another man's poison. If the missionary's great dynamic in his work is his conviction of the paramount excellence of the spiritual and moral truth contained in Christianity, he will find himself confronted by the equally strong but antagonistic convictions of men of all other faiths, and he may reluctantly conclude that it is not for him to judge for others. Indeed what principle of conduct is less stable and vigorous than devotion to an ideal, such as the motive to missionary labour now under discussion really is? For not only is the world filled with the conflict of rival ideals, but each man probably changes his own ideals many times in the course of life: in especial does he do so if he be a strong and a growing man. The mind and heart will, in its growing knowledge of its own instability, falter in any life which is inspired by devotion to an ideal, the sanctions of which are supplied by the man's own admiration or needs. The noblest motives within him will urge him to be conciliatory towards all sincere opposition, and to acquiesce in the adoption by others of ideals diametrically opposed to his own.

The strength of the true and aggressive preacher of Christ has always lain elsewhere. It has been found in an intense realization of One whose voice was no mere echo of the aspirations or convictions of the soul, but who ruled the soul and commanded the man. It has lain in the conviction that this One

was the one Lord of all mankind, and that, because this was so, His will and His grace must be the one religion for all mankind. The great impulse which has ever carried the Gospel forward on its victorious way has been the adoring worship of that will, the invincible strength of the men who found in it their panoply, as they found in it their peace. The love which has been borne by apostles, who in all ages have fed the flock of God, has not been first of all a love for the sheep or a love for the truth, but a deep and penitent love for the Master who loved them and had given Himself for them. The preaching of His word has been done in all lands and times by men like the Anglo-Saxon saint, St. Gutlac, whose heart, the chronicler says, "was full of brand-hot love." The love for mankind which has filled the noblest souls, and wrung with yearning men like Paul, has been largely derivative, and learnt from communion with the Master, so that Paul spoke of his passionate desires for the salvation of his converts as being the very love of the Lord within him, a longing after them in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ.

And as it was at the beginning of missions, so it is now, and so it ever will be:—Christ and not Christianity! A person and not a system; the obedience of faith and not the exposition of principles! It was a supreme revelation of the person of Jesus Christ which brought the great force into the world that should turn it upside down, using for its agents feeble men whom it transformed into giants. "Where else," asks Dr. Harnack, "can such a thing be found as

that those who had lived with the Lord, eaten and drunk with Him, should regard Him—not as the Revealer of God—but as the Prince of life, the Redeemer and Judge of the world? People say," he goes on, "that Islam is the one religion that was born in the open day; but what, pray, about Christianity?"

And the religion that was thus born within the circle of history and of the civilized world, which grew up under the close attention of Greeks and Romans, enunciated as its central fact and principle a Person. Truth is boldly and for ever shifted, for all who believe in His name, from the region of propositions and abstract truths to that of the concrete life of the founder of their faith. Life and guidance are henceforth to be sought in Him, and in Him, the fountain of all His truth, men are themselves henceforth to live. Their character is to be found in Him, for He is to dwell in them, to speak at their lips and work at their hands. His motives and affections are to become theirs, and His will is to be the rule of their unswerving action. The union is to be so intimate that the image of the vine and its branches shall best portray it: one sap of life flows through stock and branch alike. The fruit pertains to both.

And yet, whilst the liberty of the Christian is thus in one sense so severely curtailed, it is, in a far deeper and truer one, secured and enhanced. For this obedience to Christ is no thraldom to an alien prince, but, on the contrary, whilst rendered to another, it is loyalty to the profoundest principle of order within the soul. The principle which reconciles these two

apparently distinct orders of service is found in the fundamental faith that Christ and the human soul are of one ineffable image, and that therefore to know Christ is to learn to know oneself, and that to obey Christ is to be true to oneself and to quench the disorder of conflicting impulses. Hence there naturally ensues the fact that the utmost fidelity to Christ brings the largest liberty to the man, stimulates into freest and happiest initiative all his mental and spiritual parts. There is no paradox more plain to experience than that the prisoners of Jesus Christ are truly free. Here lies the core of the Gospel of the New Commandment which Christ proclaimed to a world in bonds: 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

Man is made for obedience; he is not truly human until he has learnt it. Till then his life has the fickleness, the aimlessness, the impulsiveness of the animal. But, unlike the animal, he has a loathing for a disordered and fragmentary existence. He is alive to the great scheme of order that fills the universe, and binds things great and small into one, and he is restless if he knows himself to be a foe to that order, a wandering star unbound in the sweep and orbit of law, unlinked and alien to the morning stars that sing together and all the sons of God that shout for joy. Above every other necessity of his nature therefore is that of discovering his rightful lord, and there is a sense in which all human quests are summed in this. The world in Christ's day was sad and weary in the search. The sanctions of law and order,

whether internal or external, were failing them. Philosophy in Greece had reached the point of confessing a failure to answer the questions which for centuries it had asked: What is the good, the beautiful, the true? In despair it was turning from the barren methods of speculation to the wild words of rhapsodists and the ill-ordered intuitions of Neoplatonism. And Rome, that had sought for a principle of order in the institutions of the home and state, found its ideals unattainable, and, amid corruptions that filled its best men with despair, it mourned the transient dreams of long-gone simpler days. The preachers of Christ met the weary world with the declaration that a light had shined in the life of the Galilean peasant wherein both men and nations might walk and not stumble. They declared that the man, whose name Pilate had written at the cross-head as that of the King of the Jews, was a king in very deed, and not for Jews only but for all mankind.

And the history of the world since that time has justified the apostles' claim that men should bow in obedience to Christ, and find in it the supreme principle of action. Just as Pilate wrote Christ's royal name in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek, so did it verily come to pass that those languages, with the peoples that used them, and the literatures, philosophies, and institutions that pertained to them, became the three great agents in proclaiming Christ's Kingdom to the ancient world, and through it to all mankind. The Greek lent his beautiful speech to tell the story of God's New Testament to man, and he lent the fine thought which underlay that speech to

give enunciation to the great theology which should proclaim to man Christ's kingly claims. The Roman lent his strong speech too, but lent besides his yet stronger nature, and all the complex civilization which he had built up, to preach the rightful sovereignty of Jesus over all mankind.

The principle of obedience to Christ then, in which missions were rooted at the first and must remain rooted to the end, is the central one of all, and is consonant with the fullest presentation of human nature.

And the obedience of the Apostles led forthwith to amazing results. First of all, it led to that supreme change in themselves which Pentecost brought. They tarried in Jerusalem, as they were bidden, until the Father's gift was shed upon them, and they were fitted to become Christ's witnesses by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Then as they preached the Gospel there was seen in Galilee and Judæa the rise of an unprecedented society. Men of many races and religions came together, never again to part. A principle underlay their message which bound the most diverse into unity. In the name of Christ all men were found to be one; in the Church which thus arose there was neither Jew nor Greek.

The land of Christ's birth was the meeting-place of races. The Jew claimed it in the name of Jehovah's promise, though the seed of an earlier race was still to be found in it. The Roman held it by virtue of his heavy hand and insatiable earth-hunger, whilst lastly it was thoroughly Hellenized, and the trade, the thoughts, and the vices of Greece freely occupied

it. Christ had gone in and out amongst this motley population, had taught and wrought amid it, and His purpose embraced every part of it. His words and ministry refused the limits which His disciples sought to impose. Unknown as yet to them, His life amongst them was binding in their lives with those of the nations against whom they shut their hearts, and breaking down the barriers by which each nation sought to wall all others out.

The Christian religion is the greatest of all missionary religions, because, among other things, it more obviously than any other claims every man on the bare ground of his manhood, and addresses to every one with absolute impartiality its invitation and promise. Christ lays the foundations of a world-wide empire in declaring the Father of all mankind. The Jew had not done this, for he had so interpreted God's election of his race as to present God as partial. The Jew therefore was a sectarian, and denied his kinship with the Gentile, and his infidelity and spiritual blindness met their deserts in the hatred with which the stranger repaid his pride. Christ's word profoundly revolutionized the Jews who accepted it. They forsook the cold isolation in which they had stood; and for the first time in the history of their race they discovered that the world was filled with brothers, and that at all costs they must serve and win them. They became witnesses to One whose love embraces all mankind; this is the Gospel which they travel forth to declare to every creature, and by this preaching they seek to compass all the globe within the purposes of the grace of God,

and to bind in one family all the disparted and distrustful tribes of man.

But this world-wide aim of the Gospel becomes yet clearer a few years later. Paul opens a new era in the history of missions and in the history of the Church. He understands more perfectly than the twelve do what Christ's mind is. Though born out of due time, the tides of the new life flow in greater volume through him; he is a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name to men of every tribe and age. He penetrates beneath the veil that arrests the gaze of his nation; he pierces through the symbol to the reality. Mankind is seen to be the true Israel of God, whose name is legible within the covenants, and who is appointed heir of all the promises. The day of types and shadows is past, the fulness of the times has come. Man must enter on his great possession in God, and God upon his heritage in man! Thus instructed in the will of the Lord, Paul looked across the narrow Ægean Sea, and purposed to carry the Gospel to the imperial lands of Europe.

If the external history of the Church be written, the names of great men will inevitably stand prominently upon the page. In one sense, the history of missions is peculiarly the history of great missionaries. Its annals are to be found on the shelves of biography, and from this point of view the name of Paul can scarcely be held too high. But the external history of the Church is in reality no history of the Church at all. It deals with semblances and not realities, with effects and not with their efficient causes. Paul and all great missionaries of Christ ask

to be hidden and forgotten that He alone may appear, for they declare that He alone is the great efficient cause, the one supreme reality. It is claimed by some that Paul shall no longer fill so large a place as heretofore in the esteem of the Church. For Paul and Paulinism, it is contended, have been thrust between us and Christ, so that we are in danger of seeing a Christ that is tinged and interpreted by Paul, rather than of interpreting Paul by Christ. A deeper instinct of the Church has however understood the matter differently, and has accepted Paul's own profound interpretation of the case as the true one, and has seen that the Apostle was, in reality, the servant and not the master, the vessel and not the potter.

Paul interprets Christ in a measure, it is true, but he does it by presenting us with the spectacle of Christ's power to interpret men to themselves, and life to them, and thus to transform them. For Paul is made a new creature when it pleases God to reveal His Son in him. No other change could ever be so profound. That which was last has become first, that which was first is last. Paul interprets Christ in the sense that he declares that only which he sees in Christ, but he sees so much that it is not the limit of his range of vision but its extent that impresses us. It is not therefore Paul that we see when we look at Paul; he is the window through which we see the sun in the heavens, and if the glass is not wholly clear and stainless, the brightness of the light well-nigh swallows up all foreign hues as when the sunlight falls through ancient cathedral glass.

Of those deep interpretive words in which Paul writes the inner story of his life: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me,' Dr. Harnack finely says that they are not to be handled as dogmas and treated as historically explicable; they are the crucial facts of the life which God Himself implants within the soul, and in the revival from age to age of convictions such as Paul's are to be found the critical epochs of Christian theology.

The record then of Paul's missionary assault on Europe will not be read as simply illustrating the character and genius of the Apostle by those who have any fellowship with him in the spirit and secret of their lives. Luke's record of the steps which led to that assault tell of a heavenly control and impulse. The Lord of the Harvest thrust Paul out of Asia into the white fields of the West. He had been willing to tarry in the sea-board provinces of Asia Minor, but he was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the Word there. He essayed to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus suffered him not, and, passing by Mysia, he came down to Troas. His Lord Himself is closing his narrower ministry, and has thrust him down to that critical point of land where Asia reaches out as though it would touch Europe, and there, at Troas, the darkness closes in about the Christ-led missionary. But whilst this language of Luke's is that which is truest to the facts, and states their deeper nature, it does not preclude the propriety of other language which shall express other aspects of the case. Paul was not a pawn moved upon the chess-board by a wholly outside force. If,

as has been already contended, the control of the man by Christ really enhances his own activity and liberty, and does not destroy it, then there was the clear purpose of preaching the Gospel to European nations formed in Paul's mind, as truly as there was that Divine direction to which Luke's language points. Paul's normal thoughts and desires are the vehicle of the indwelling Christ, and he has deeply apprehended the necessity of carrying his Master's name to Greece and Rome.

How thrilling then this spectacle of a man embarking on so vast an enterprise. He is at Troas, that memorable spot through which the ebb and flow of conquest has rolled, now Eastward and now Westward. Hither had come Xerxes, with his countless army, and hence he crossed into Europe with rapine and cruelty in his heart; and here, at a later day, Alexander urged the tide of armed men in the reverse direction, and claimed the East in an insatiable ambition. And now again an Oriental has come to the gateway, and he also looks with a world-embracing purpose towards the West. But how mean his equipment, how beggarly his following! His whole arsenal of assault lies in the message in his heart, and his whole commissariat is in the mean implements of the humblest of artizans. But he is here, and he is of unflinching purpose, and when he lies down to rest the visions of the night do but reflect the thought of the day. A European calls to him across the waters: a Macedonian speaks, but speaks for more than Macedonia: 'Come over, poor follower of the Jewish

Christ, we perish for want of that which thou canst give.'

The obedience of faith was the only motive adequate to guide and sustain the Apostle in an enterprise so vast and so unprecedented as this. It is the motive which he avows as foremost in the opening words of his letter to the Romans. It was the watchword of his conduct at all these crucial moments. His mind had indeed worked freely, his spirit had explored the treasures of truth which had been committed to him, but how poor and vain in view of the sore maladies of Europe were all the thoughts and intents of his own heart. It is the deep assurance that the man is but the obedient bond-servant, and that his Master is directing him forward that can strengthen the missionary in his assault upon the high-places of heathenism.

As we look back to that moment in the history of Christian missions, we feel how supremely critical a test of the great claims of Christ Paul was about to make. An unknown and poor Jew is about to seek to plant his Jewish faith in Western minds. The Semite is seeking to win the Aryan!

Can ever a wider or deeper gulf be crossed by any creed than was crossed by Christianity when it was borne from Judæa and planted in the hearts and lives of the men of Athens and Corinth and Rome? May we not say that the prow of Paul's ship, as he sailed from Troas to Neapolis, cut to tatters for ever the argument which men urge against the world-wide spread of Christianity on the grounds of racial differences? The voyage was a very short one

if measured by leagues, but if measured by other standards it was one of the longest that any traveller could take. For it carried him out of the East into the West, out of the lands which lived in the past to the lands that were facing the future, from the home of an unchanging tradition into the midst of races eager to enter on an ever fuller life. What test then could be applied to any religion so severe as that to which Paul was prepared to submit the Gospel of Christ?

And Paul was keenly alive to the seriousness of the step. An Hebrew of the Hebrews, he was steeped in the traditions of race-feeling and race-animosity that ruled his age, and it was only as an outcome of that profound revolution in all his thinking which the revelation of Christ within him had wrought, that he could traverse all those traditions in the simple yet most profound declaration, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." These words carry a gospel direct from Christ to the rent family of man; they are a proclamation of peace in the civil war of races. They are words which are a direct revelation from Heaven, carrying a promise of the day when there shall be but one family on earth, and when nation shall no more lift up sword against nation.

The great Apostle was in advance of his time in holding this great truth, as great missionaries have continually been in advance of their times in affirming the spiritual kinship of nations whose genius and whose ideals seemed wholly alien to their own. Paul's countrymen were not so advanced. For them a great gulf separated the chosen people from all

peoples besides, and the Gentile could only enter within the covenants of mercy as a favoured stranger. Even those who had companied with the Lord found Paul's advanced views a great difficulty, and only came to give a provisional assent to them in deference to facts which they could not gainsay. And if Paul was enunciating a truth which found no sympathy amongst Jews, it is certain that he could expect none from the Greek or the Roman. The Greek was an elect man too ; he was as clear as ever Jew could be that he was Heaven's favourite. He denied all ties of blood with the barbarians that hemmed his beautiful country in on every side. He was the fair fruit of that land, was autochthonous in it, the progeny of gods. He will disdainfully repudiate Paul's advances, and eye him with the coldness which his presumption merits. And if Jew and Greek thus proudly cut themselves aloof from all mankind besides, the Roman was scarcely less eager to do so. He, and not another, was of the regal mould, and all nations must pay court to him ; the Jew was, in especial, of strange and hateful blood, and the Roman could ill brook his presence within the empire.

Paul takes ship at Troas in a deep and settled faith which he holds against the whole world. He has learnt in Christ that mankind makes but one family, and the differences which in his day appeared so great are treated by him as utterly trivial and superficial. Its unity in Christ, on the other hand, is deep and pervading, and upon it Paul takes his stand. He preaches this divine doctrine of the oneness of the family of man at the critical moments of his

missionary life. It is enunciated in his opening sentences as he accepts the invitation of the Athenians to set forth the new teaching which he has brought to Greece. He sweeps away the tissue of their idolatries to proclaim his hearers to be the creatures of the same God as himself, made by Him for the same great end. There is but one God, and that God has made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. Again Paul declares the same conviction when he confronts Rome. The Roman was one with the Jew as he was one with the most degraded savage in that deep humanity which needed the Gospel of Christ, and on Paul, who had been taught that oneness, rested the obligation of administering to all whom he could reach the word of life. "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So as much as in me is I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are in Rome."

We have seen within our own time the rise of many anthropological sciences, which, in comparing race with race, or language with language, have thrown into fresh prominence the racial differences which exist, whether regard be had to physical or to mental features. The comparative study of language, which received its main modern impulse in the so-called discovery of Sanscrit, has mapped out with clearness two great families of speech, and has indicated roughly a great multitude of others. The principal popular outcome of that study has been a belief that whilst the European races are more closely akin than had been imagined, and are, further, bound by blood ties to the peoples of Persia and India, they

are wholly separate from that clearly marked group of nations known as Semitic, of which the Jews and the Arabs remain as the great modern representatives. The effect of the study has been to deepen the conviction that profound lines of cleavage run through the human race, and emphasis has been laid rather upon the differences which characterize the various families of mankind than upon the features which all have in common. In a similar way the ethnologist has pointed us to important cranial and other structural differences, whilst the student of social institutions has further deepened the lines of demarcation. An objection to missions has arisen out of these studies in the minds of many thoughtful persons. They have argued that it is not a very intelligent proceeding to carry our English Christianity to the Dravidians of South India, or to expect from the Mongol a fellowship with us in faith and worship. Fortunately for us, however, such objections have been abundantly answered by history. They were fully met and completely answered when Paul set sail for Neapolis, and when there were soon found rising upon Greek soil little companies of Aryan Christians who called on the name of the Jewish Messiah. It is a happy thing for the world that the extension of the Gospel amongst remote peoples has not been left to the chances of fluctuating opinion, but has been committed into the safer keeping of obedience; and the comparative student of race sees to-day all racial boundaries traversed by the missionaries of the Cross, and all theories of the fundamental unlikeness

of the various tribes of man rebutted by the demonstration of their unity in Christ.

But to-day there is a great change discernible in opinion upon these subjects. Races which had been thought to be severely unlike prove to have deep and unsuspected resemblances. Thus the Semites can no longer be contrasted with the Aryans as having always been inspired by a monotheistic instinct. Their early history, as Dr. Schrader and others show, must have been polytheistic, whilst, on the other side, the Aryan must be denied an aboriginal institution of monogamy. The echoes of his earliest life tell of many wives in the hero's home. To-day again no student of the subject would suppose that families of speech point directly to families of men. Language, as Prof. Sayce says, is a social product, and the similarities and differences between speech and speech, will, if unsupported by other evidence, tell us little about the likeness or unlikeness of the people that use them. There may be the profoundest linguistic differences amongst people of the same stock. Finally, ethnologists are less disposed than formerly to insist that the craniological and other structural differences which they record point to any radical divisions in the human family. No differences are ever suggested that would warrant the student in speaking of distinct varieties of the human species, whilst, on the other hand, there would seem to be grounds for believing that very distinct types of men have again and again united in the rise of the various civilizations of the world. Prof. Sayce thinks it probable that in "the cradle of the Aryan

race" both the long-headed and the short-headed types met. With perhaps still more confidence do the students of human arts and civilization declare the substantial unity of mankind. Men act wonderfully alike under like circumstances, let the colour of their skin or the shape of their heads be what it may. Dr. Tylor tells us that New Zealanders are weaving mats to-day in the same patterns as are found in the fragments which have been discovered on the sites of the ancient lake-dwellers of Switzerland.

The objection then to aggressive missions on the ground of deep racial differences can be allowed no weight at all. Even if there were some revival and rehabilitation of it a few years ago, a juster estimate of the case has now disposed of it. It is moreover nearly two thousand years too late to urge it, and if any are found to contend that it is mistaken and vain to seek to carry our English Christianity to the high-cheek-boned Mongol, or the woolly-headed negro, the reply must be :—It is not English at all ; this salvation is of the Jews. It has conquered Englishmen, as earlier it conquered Greeks and Romans, and there is no gulf left for it to cross wider than those which it has often crossed already. We do not carry it to China and to Africa as being some dear and peculiar institution of our own ; we go there as the captives and bond-servants of the Nazarene. He has conquered us, and at His word we carry His victorious name abroad, and wait with confidence to see every knee bow in worship before Him.

But what now is the message which this ambitious missionary Paul will carry to the imperial Aryans of Greece and Rome? He is a man of the schools, of letters, and philosophy; a man too of address and shrewdness. He cannot lightly have come the length he has already travelled in his great attempt on Europe. It was not possible for an observant Jew of Paul's day to under-estimate the West. Greece and Rome counted too heavily in every part of Jewry to allow of it: the force which belonged to them was felt in every department of life and thought: they could not be lightly won!

There is this at least in the Apostle's favour, as he embarks for Europe, that Europe is anxiously seeking for a religion. The gods there are dead or dying, reverence has become an impossibility, and philosophy is spent with profitless questioning. But the religion which the scribes of the West ask for is one which shall co-ordinate all the truth of past religions, a basal philosophy which shall include and interpret the disjointed principles which underlie all the bewildering systems of the present. The new religion which the West is wearily seeking is one which shall speak in the language of universal truth, and be free of every element that is national, local, or personal.

Paul has no thought of complying with these demands as he approaches the shores of Greece. On the contrary he responds to the call for help which he has heard in his vision of the night with the startling and uncompromising proclamation of Jesus and the Resurrection. Nothing more narrowly local

and personal than the religion which he bore to lands that claimed emancipation from such creeds. Nothing more offensively exceptional and supernatural than the story which he came to tell to men who were tired of marvels, and surfeited with incarnations and apotheoses. And when the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him in Athens they deemed him but one babbler the more, coming to idle Athens with idle tales of yet more strange gods. And though, won perhaps by some unusual qualities which they saw in the Jew, they gave him a hearing on the Areopagus, when he reached the heart of his subject and preached the offence of the Resurrection, his address was interrupted by the mockery of his hearers.

But Paul had no other message for Greece. Instead of seeking by any systematized doctrine to bring order into the perplexed minds and confused lives of men, Paul preached the love of God as shown at Bethlehem and Calvary, and the power of God unto the salvation of every believer as set forth in the raising up of Jesus from the dead. This Gospel of love and power was directly sent to every creature as a personal and individual declaration and appeal to him. Instead of a philosophy of sin and emancipation from it, this Gospel told of how Jesus looked upon and saved the sinners who drew near to Him. It told of that woman of a city who was a sinner, and of the breaking up of the deep fountains within her at the unmeted love which Jesus had for her whilst yet she was in all her defilement. And as men and women in far-off lands read this story, so local and

particular, they discovered the universal within the particular and they reached out hands of penitence and faith towards Him who was thus brought so near to their sin and need. Instead of laying bare in careful analysis the nature of man and religion, a mirror is held up to the soul in the life and death of the Son of Man. And as its story is told, a truth more myriad-sided, more universally apt, is uttered to the world than can ever be included in the language of abstract propositions. The deep dark mystery of sin is uttered for the Greek and the Barbarian, the Roman and the Jew alike, in the story of Gethsemane and Calvary, of the great soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, of the heart that broke in grief and love. And then, finally, in the preaching of the Resurrection is given the great challenge to man everywhere to break through the spell of a physical order, and, amidst his environment of Nature and of Death, to live and move and have his being in God, to believe that He rules that order and is not ruled by it, that great ends for man and for eternity are served, but are not limited, by it, and that the tyranny over his faith of a philosophy that deals with the phenomenal and the illusive is a degrading one which, in the name of the very nature and rights of the soul, must be repudiated. Paul and the preachers of the Gospel in every age have refused all concessions to naturalism, and they have, in the declaration of the historical resurrection of Jesus, met the universal need of men for the revelation of that power for which the heart cries aloud in the prison-house of nature and decay. In

the midst of the mysteries which baffle human inquiry in every land and in every age they have preached in the name of the risen Jesus a supernatural order which, because it deals with those realities which underlie phenomena, can never be harmonized with a phenomenal order, nor come within the purview of a science which avowedly confines itself to this last. So far from Paul really mistaking the sick cry for help which reached him from Europe when he preached to it Jesus and the Resurrection, his conduct was in harmony with the profoundest diagnosis, and was abundantly justified in the happy event.

For very soon little companies of men and women were gathering together in the name of Jesus in that great land where Paul's European labours commenced, and Europe soon learnt to follow Greece in the way of faith in the power of the crucified and risen Saviour.

To-day India and China, Thibet and Japan, stand over against our preaching as distrustfully as ever Europe did in the first century. They are wearied with their outworn faiths, resentful towards every attempt to burden them anew. They look upon the English missionary as a man of yesterday, and upon his enthusiasm as the untempered zeal of inexperience. They smile disdainfully at his endeavours to entangle them again in yokes of bondage.

And yet if this be a true account of the matter, or if thus matters were but a few short years ago, there are already signs in these great lands that, whilst some mock, others are asking to hear again

concerning this thing. A growing apprehension is discernible that beneath the personal and historical details of this strange story, which, travelling from the East to win the West, now travels back from the West to win a larger East, there lies an eternal and all-embracing truth. The story repels and mightily attracts, it offends and it wins, it is alien and aggressive and yet it is native to every land, the implicit speech of every heart.

We are living in a time when the fruits of the study of Comparative Religion are widely scattered. It is but some twenty-five years since Professor Max Müller passed through the press the last volumes of his translation of the Rig Veda, and it was only in the year 1870 that he delivered those lectures on Comparative Religion at the Royal Institution which really made the study attractive to most educated Englishmen. Very much has been done since that time to make generally known the great bibles of the East, and our missionary work is undertaken to-day in the full knowledge that the nations to which we carry the Gospel have long been in possession of much moral and spiritual truth, and that their history reveals a deeply religious temper and aspiration.

Our age is nobly characterized by a spirit of sympathy, and it is addressing itself in this spirit to the solution in religion, in politics, and in society, of problems which apart from it are insoluble. It has been in this spirit that it has welcomed every noble line in the Vedas or the Avesta, in the teachings of Buddha or of Confucius, whilst on the other hand this

sympathetic appreciation of the religious truth of any people to whom an Apostle of Jesus Christ goes is a commendation to them of himself and his message. They perceive at once a brother in him and not a foe, a man whose spiritual nature is like their own. Their deepest truth is truth for him, and he in turn may perhaps minister truth to them. The missionary himself is fortified for his task by every fresh apprehension of the spiritual possession of the men to whom he goes. It is by virtue of the light which they have, and the love of the light which is in them, that they must recognize the master light which he comes to reveal. Were they wholly without such light they would be sunk so near to the level of the brute that his task might even fill him with despair. It was just because the Athenian grasped at bottom the deep conviction that he was the offspring of God that Paul could confidently appeal to him to turn from gods graven by art and device of man. The deep spiritual truths which their own poets and thinkers had uttered furnished a new incentive to Paul to preach to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in the same way a knowledge of the religious literature of the lands which we call heathen leads the modern missionary to make his appeal against their idolatries and their grossness in the very words of their own poets and prophets.

It may indeed well be the case that in a few persons the effect of a slight study of Comparative Religion has been to daunt rather than to enhance the missionary motive. There are not wanting those who have argued that the heathen should be left to

that provision for their spiritual wants which an all merciful Father has made for them. That argument ought indeed to be a forbidden one to every follower of Christ, but still there may be some who employ it. A frank contemplation, however, of the actual condition of the heathen lands which possess these sacred books ought to suffice to dispose of the argument for ever. The great heathen continents are all of them dark ones, the homes of cruelty and lust, the scenes of oppression and enslavement. No land whose literature has fallen within the sympathetic interest of our time can rival India in the richness and volume of its spiritual history, and no land conforms more completely to that terrible picture which Paul drew in the Epistle to the Romans of the heathenism that filled the cultured and religious lands of the West. It were a sorry misreading of Indian literature that would hide from the student the terrible picture which, apart from Christianity, modern India presents. Paul went to Greece in frank recognition of the spiritual truth which it held, but the flagrant fact of the case was that that truth was in the main powerless. There was some knowledge of the right; there was no adequate motive to perform it. In Athens as in Rome men saw and approved of the better but followed the worse. Paul went to proclaim amongst them *the great motive*, to declare to every man Him who had loved him and given Himself for him, that the man in a return of love might be made a new creature and live a new life. It was in need for this that Paul saw Europe pleading: it was to supply it that he dared to come even to Rome:

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for *it is the power of God* unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

The true missionary is rather a witness than an advocate. He testifies first of all to a salvation that he has himself found; he is himself a standing proof of the power of God. The supreme want in the mission-field everywhere is the want of those who can bear a good confession. Thank God, such witnesses are not absent, and their testimony is carrying conviction to every race under heaven. Nations which repel the preacher are impressed by the saint, and a holy and beneficent life commends the Gospel. Already it may be claimed that in every great nation in the world, Christianity is entering on a life which is independent of the missionary, and the outlook justifies a sober belief that the religion of Christ will be the one religion of mankind.

The great religions which most strenuously resist it, Judaism, Mahommedanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are just those which most nearly approach it, and which are inspired by the spiritual truths which they hold to fight hardest for self-preservation. But even already they are dimly conscious of the new spirit and strength that are in it. No doctrinal, no historical, difficulties which may be felt about Christianity will avail to counteract the vast influence which it has on all observers. The difficulties which there may be of that kind are not greater for the Hindu or the Chinaman to-day than they have been in the past for the European: no supernatural and miraculous claims which Christianity makes can

daunt the instinct of the soul or the affections of the heart. They will rather deeply approve themselves to them in the great lands of heathendom to-day as they have done in past days in the lands now called Christian. India is to-day plainly searching her heart in the presence of Christ, and whilst there is a passionate fight on the part of many for what they deem the liberty of free thought, no symptom strikes close observers as being more significant than the silent abandonment by many of the pantheism which has immemorially held the land, and the rise of great theistic systems of thought under the influence of Christianity.

The obedience of the Church to the command of Christ to make disciples of all nations has led to results which have had a powerful reflex influence upon its faith. It exalted Christ by its implicit reliance upon His word, but then in turn it has seen so glorious a fulfilment of that word that Christ has been exalted before it, beyond all its earlier thought. Paul, in the obedience of faith, carried the name of the Jewish Messiah to Greece and Rome, and having believed he then saw the glory of God. For behold, Greece in its wisdom, and Rome in its might, brought the first-fruits of their devotion to His shrine. A solemn awe might well fall upon the heart of the Apostle as he beheld the Jewish Messiah revealing the greatness of His true title, laying aside the guise and garb of the local and national, and approving Himself the very Son of Man, the great universal Brother and Lord. The conquests of Jesus Christ in the world compelled a new reverence and worship in His followers

and forced them to inquire more deeply into His true name and nature. The reverent speculation of the Church upon this subject was inevitable in view of the triumphs of their Master's name, and out of the records of the acts of obedient Apostles in every land were drawn the materials for the edifice of a new theology. Greek Christians in Alexandria sought in the third century to enunciate the sacred name of Him who was entering on a possession of the world, and the great declaration at Nicæa that Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the Eternal Son of God is to be intimately associated with the fidelity of the Church to Christ's last command and the blessing which rested upon it.

A principle of profound and eternal moment is discernible here. Theology is not a science to be greatly advanced by speculation. Its task is rather to record those apprehensions of God which are borne in upon those who have close fellowship with Him. The theology which is not the utterance of the spiritual experience of saints can have no great value, and may be utterly hurtful. Obedience is a supreme organ of knowledge here, and the hopefulness of modern theology is only reasonable in the degree that it stands deeply-rooted in religion. The decisions of the Council of Nicæa have proved irreversible, just because they recorded that glory of the Lord which was seen by those who had believed His word and obeyed His command. But those decisions were uttered under the severe limitations of the fourth century and of the Roman Empire. The name of Christ must be enunciated anew, and in the larger

vocabulary of a redeemed world. And this great end of theology can only be secured as Christ's servants carry His name into every land and carry it to every class. The new theology can only utter its highest truths when that name has not only sounded throughout heathen lands, but when its savour has healed the social distempers of our time, and made a regenerate England, with a ransomed East-End in every town; when Jesus is enthroned in our art and science, our trade and politics, our literature and whole civilization.

In this great Christian aggression, this true missionary movement, there is need for the service of every one who names Christ. In the early days of the Church every true Christian was an apostle, sent forth upon his daily path as a bold confessor of his Lord. And to-day again the imperative duty lies upon the Church of recognizing that it can never delegate to committees and societies the fulfilment of Christ's command. The aggressive Church of the first centuries was despised and poor, and it is a miserable error to think that the sinews of the Church's warfare are to be found in her coffers. They are to be found to-day, as ever, in faith and prayer and obedience. There is no bar set by poverty in the way of missionary work, as is abundantly proved again in our own day. Nay, the only condition of the money in the Church's treasury being used by God at all is that it is there as the expression of a devotion which first offered the more golden gifts of obedience.

No attempt at a history of foreign missions is

made in this essay, but it is the writer's wish to urge that at this time, when several Protestant Churches are celebrating the centenary of their aggressive work in heathen lands, the call of God's Providence bids them give to this work a far larger part of their strength than they have hitherto done. The Protestant Churches lagged sorely in this service in the centuries immediately succeeding the Reformation. A few noble names are joined with those of the missionary pioneers, Eliot and Brainerd, but it was not till the Baptist ministers of Nottingham stirred slumbering consciences in the year 1784, by calling on Christians to pray for a baptism of the Holy Ghost and for the spread of the Gospel, that a better age was inaugurated. Carey went to India in 1792, and his letters so stirred many hearts at home that in 1795 the London Missionary Society was founded and sent out its first apostles in the wake of Captain Cook. Then in 1799 there came the Church Missionary Society. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had been founded ninety-eight years previously, but its work was then purely colonial, and until the year 1826 it continued to be so.

It is then, roughly, the case that we are now standing at the close of the first century of foreign Protestant Missions. And what a century it has been! It was ushered in upon the wake of the French Revolution. The old order was passing, old barriers were breaking, a new heaven and a new earth were dawning. It did not yet appear what things they were that could not be shaken. Voltaire boldly predicted that the nascent century would see Chris-

tianity swept from the earth. But whilst the leaven of class hatred was working in France, the leaven of the Gospel led in England to the great ferment of the evangelical revival. John Wesley's guiding hand was upon it till nearly the close of the last century. The echoes of the storming of the Bastille reached the veteran preacher as he was still labouring for the deepest revolution of all in human society, and scarcely had he been laid in his grave in 1791 when from the revived churches men stood forth as soldiers of Christ to storm the strongholds of heathenism in every land in their Master's name.

And speedily once more did believing men see the glory of God. Who shall adequately record the fruit of this century of missionary service? How brief a period is it in the history of the unchanging East, and yet the changes which it has wrought are supreme. When Carey sailed to India, Church and State at home alike resented and resisted his action, whilst India was built up against him in the defiant walls of oriental disdain and oriental vice. The English community in Calcutta, that sinfully denied its stewardship, was tainted with Indian pollution. On the return of Warren Hastings to London he shamelessly lived in open adultery, and so many wealthy Indian merchants kept him company in his sins that Mr. Pitt expressed alarm lest the moral foundations of English society were giving way.

To-day all is changed. The fidelity of William Carey, and the incentive which that proved, have rescued our country from Mr. Pitt's reproach, whilst so profound a change has been wrought in India itself

that it seems to-day to stand upon the trembling edge of a great national religious change. Effort after effort is made by Hinduism to secure for itself a future by a bold absorption of Christian teaching. But the new piece only rends the old garment further, and prophets like Mazumda are rising up from the bosom of Hinduism who boldly claim India for Christ.

Many of the great Protestant Missionary Societies are to-day deeply moved at the spectacle of what God has wrought, and are desirous of bringing larger gifts to His altar than ever they did in the century now closed. The London Missionary Society keeps its centenary with joy and adoration. It lays a new tribute of praise and worship at the feet of Christ; it receives anew His great commission, and bends in faith and obedience.

The review of the century brings up great names and great achievements in the strength of the Lord: it perhaps brings up also some memories less bright. The Congregational churches, into the custody of which this Society has largely fallen, have known the flowing and ebbing of the tides of the Spirit, and it has been noted with anxiety that, within the latter half of its history, the Society has remained almost stationary, when regard is had to the contribution made to the ranks of its missionaries. The churches at home have multiplied fast. God has opened to them door after door of honour and privilege, but they have not hastened to pass through those other doors which His hand was opening to them in the lands of heathendom. So great at length became the

dearth of men who offered themselves as apostles to the heathen that the Society's power to move forward was paralyzed, and its Directors began with heavy hearts to consider a retreat. It was at this moment that God graciously visited the hearts of many in our churches with penitence and prayer, and that the Directors made the stirring appeal to the churches to pray that an addition of not less than one hundred might be made to their staff before the celebration of the centenary in the year 1895.

Perils beset very closely a dead-ripe civilization like that of England to-day, and a Church life which stands in privileged enjoyment of it. The sinews of effort are relaxed by the plenty upon the board, and tasks which transcend the every-day calls of the domestic life of the Church are resented. But a deeper instinct declares that the very future of that domestic life is at stake here. When famine beset the home of the widow of Zarephath, and she went out to gather sticks to make the last poor meal for herself and her son, God in His compassion sent His prophet to demand of her that first of all she should prepare a cake for him, and, only afterwards, for herself and her son. God's promise of plenty to her was conditional on her fidelity here. And are there wanting signs of spiritual scarcity in our home churches? In many of them there is scarcely the bread of faith and the oil of piety to sustain them in their daily part, and there is often the shrinking of weakness from the most obvious duties at their doors. In this hour of misgiving God lays upon them the task of sustaining His prophets in all the places

whither He sends them. In this hour Christ bids His foreboding disciples to lift up their eyes on the fields white to harvest.

There are many vast issues depending on the answer which they will make.

Christ's honour is deeply concerned here. Until all the nations utter His name, that name cannot be fully known by man. The Hindu demands the right to accept Christ without accepting Western Christianity, and who can say but that the Hindu and the Chinaman are to be God's instruments to deliver us from the evil accretions of a merely European orthodoxy, and to reveal Christ in simpler, truer, and diviner proportions ?

The integrity of Christ's Church is concerned here. The disciples whom He sent forth fell out by the way, and they are travelling the world to-day in mutually distrustful companies. The discussion of the differences between Eastern and Western Churchmen, between Catholic and Protestant, between Churchman and Dissenter, does but further widen them. The Church must be made one in the place of obedience to those great primary commands, the force of which all own. It is in India and China that Christians are drawn into a fellowship of prayer and service that no rivalry annoys. It is in the deadly field of Africa that Protestant must learn to love Catholic, and that the rent Church must be bound in the sacred unity of love to one Master.

Once again, the unity of the family of man is concerned here. Nothing divides men as religions do ;

nothing but the one religion of Jesus Christ can unite them. It becomes clearer every day that no religion but that of Christ is possible in the future, and no civilization that is not rooted in it. The fellowship into which modern science has brought the ends of the earth is a curse and a hurt until it becomes a fellowship in the love and the service of Christ. In especial is it a hurt to England—the land burdened to-day with the memory of so many sins against weaker races.

And, finally, the peace of the holy city is concerned here. The prophet pleaded with Israel of old that they would understand this. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth." The Church of Christ is often like blind perverse Jerusalem of old. She will not believe that obedience is the condition of all her well-being. And age after age Christ weeps over her :—" If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!"

It is the happiness of all who love the cause of missions to know that the appeal which the Directors of the London Missionary Society have made has not fallen on deaf ears or heedless hearts. A new spirit of faith and prayer is moving in the Churches. Great things are being asked of God, great things are being done for God. And the hope solemnly deepens into conviction that the closing years of this great nineteenth century will be looked back upon as

one of the world's supreme epochs of faith, when men dared to take the Master at His word, and, in implicit reliance upon it, moved forth to gather the world's great harvest into the garner of God.

IX.

CHURCH AND STATE

THOMAS RALEIGH.

Church and State.[1]

THERE is no hard and fast line to be drawn between theology and the political sciences. The theologian, on the one hand, borrows many of his terms and modes of reasoning from the jurist; the Church, for example, is described as a 'kingdom' or a 'society'; and the use of these terms can hardly be justified without some reference to political theory. When the jurist on the other hand explores the foundations of authority and law, he must guide himself by general notions of human nature; he must at least consider the question, whether the theologian's view of man's nature and destiny is true or false. In discussing the State, the Church, and the relation of these two powers to one another, we may find ourselves at any moment on theological ground; it is therefore necessary to explain that the following pages are written by a student of law and politics, possessing no special knowledge of the history of Christian doctrines.

To understand the nature of the State, we must begin by studying its origin. Primitive society is held together, partly by tribal custom and sentiment;

[1] The author of this essay is not a Congregationalist.

partly by the local cohesion of men living together in the same spot; the constitution of the tribal and local group is determined chiefly by the necessities of self-defence. A large community defends itself better than a small one; hence the combination of smaller groups under a single government which undertakes to protect them. The city-state, as developed in the countries which bordered the Mediterranean, was very different from the empire-state as developed in the East, but both answer to the same general description; both are combinations of smaller groups under a single government. In order to take rank as a State, a community must possess these characteristic attributes, (1) definite visible boundaries, within which it is sovereign and independent, and (2) definite visible subordination of all its members to certain persons who defend and govern them. This subordination is brought about by acts of power, acquiesced in or submitted to by the subject people. Force alone is not enough to make a civilized government, but force is the first and most necessary attribute of the State.

The appropriate sphere of the State's action is the sphere within which force must or may with advantage be applied; and, according to primitive notions, the sphere thus defined includes religion. Respect for the tribal or local deity is a condition of the welfare of the people; the person who denies the gods brings the whole community into danger, and must be dealt with as a public enemy. If the Jews hear that base fellows have drawn away one of their cities from the worship of Jehovah, they are to make

inquiry, and if the thing is certain that city and its inhabitants are to be utterly destroyed. The State is, in short, a consecrated State, using its power with dogmatic rigour in support of the true religion. This doctrine embodies a great truth. The State, as Aristotle would say, comes into existence that men may live—that they may be protected against enemies and disturbers ; it exists that men may live well. The end of the State is the salvation of men, and the end is not fully attained until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of the Lord. Ultimate union between Church and State is the ideal to be kept in view ; but for the sake of this ultimate union we may be compelled to insist on separation, to protest against the premature identification of an imperfect State with an imperfect Church.

The Jewish State, as we know, was decidedly imperfect ; it was found impossible to bring the whole nation into conformity with the religious law. The prophets were sent to remind kings and people of the forgotten ideal set before them in the law ; their mission was therefore political no less than religious. In the political sphere, we must admit that they failed ; they could not bring the whole people to a sense of their duty ; almost in spite of themselves they were led to consider what must happen if the nation went down, if Judah should be scattered as the ten tribes had been scattered before. Even in that extremity the prophets were able to discern a ray of hope. A remnant of God's own people would be left, and this small body, strong in

faith and purity, would be victorious in the end, and would enter into fruition of all the blessings of the law. Up to this point, men had identified the nation with the Church; here for the first time we are presented with a new ideal—the Church, regarded as a select body of faithful people. It is first conceived as a select body of Jews; but a society whose bond of union is moral and spiritual must of necessity transcend all national distinctions. Jesus, the last and greatest of the prophets, inspires His followers with the belief that they are members of a world-wide society, citizens of a kingdom which is not of this world. This kingdom may be identified with the ideal State; it is sharply distinguished from the actual State, Roman or Jewish.

In the first place, the kingdom of Christ has no definite visible boundaries; no man has authority to say where the "true Church" begins and ends. The Apostles themselves made mistakes when they tried to draw a boundary line; they excluded persons (the man casting out devils, for instance) whom they ought to have recognized as brothers, and the parable of the wheat and tares was meant to teach them that their society must always include persons who were not loyal subjects of the king. If the Apostles had no authority to fix the boundaries of the kingdom, it seems to follow that apostolical succession, however direct and genuine, does not justify any Church in assuming to pronounce a final judgment in the case of any body claiming to be a part of the kingdom. The attempt is sometimes made to decide on the validity of such claims by purely political reasoning.

A well-known lay-Churchman, who is also a magistrate, has recently given us a good example of this argumentative method. 'I am,' he says, 'in the commission of the peace for the county of N——; there is and can be only one such commission. In like manner I hold that there can be only one body of persons in N—— duly commissioned to exercise the authority conferred by our Lord on His Apostles, and I believe the clergy of the Church of England to be that one body.' This argument is not conclusive unless on the assumption that the Church, like the State, possesses a definite territory within which it is sovereign. When the true nature of the Church has been made plain, we see that there may be two bodies of Christians in N——, separated from one another by misunderstandings or even by quarrels, but both connected by a genuine succession with the Church of the New Testament. It is too often taken for granted that where separate Christian societies exist side by side, one must be the true Church and all the others must be schismatics. The truth is, that we are all schismatics and sectarians, so long as our present divisions are allowed to continue.

In the second place, the limits of authority on the one hand and of submission on the other are less precisely defined in the Church than they are in the State. There are, indeed, some important points in which the authority of the bishop resembles that of the king. Both powers are divine in their origin; both are human and fallible in their modes of action; both are to be loyally obeyed, freely criticized, firmly resisted when they exceed the scope of

their commission. It is not superfluous to repeat these elementary propositions; they have a direct bearing on the politics of our own time. There are many good Romanists and Anglicans who apply constitutional principles to the government of the State, while at the same time they contend for absolute authority in the Church. As citizens, they say, we are bound to obey the law, but we retain the right to argue that the law is mistaken, or that it has been wrongly interpreted by those who administer it; as Churchmen, we are bound not only to obey the bishop, but to submit our judgment to his and to believe that he is in the right. But inasmuch as episcopal authority is not more divine in its origin, not less fallible in its modes of action, than the authority of kings and governors, it seems to follow that the doctrine of passive obedience may prove to be as much out of place in the Church as it is in the modern State.

If these two kinds of power are alike in their origin and in their limits, they are, nevertheless, essentially different in character. The king governs men in the mass, and he governs them whether they like it or not; his methods are of necessity somewhat rough and his standard of duty somewhat conventional. If his subjects obey the law, he makes no nice inquisition into their motives; the obedience which is due to self-interest or fear serves his purpose as well as the obedience which is due to loyal belief in himself and in the law which he represents. The bishop governs a select body of faithful people, willing scholars who submit themselves to his in-

fluence; he is not, *qud* bishop, armed with any coercive power; his methods are spiritual and his standard of truth and duty is ideally high. He is not content to produce mere conformity to rule; the conformity which is due to self-interest or superstitious fear is hateful to him. He cannot indeed make inquisition into motives, any more than the king; but he holds up the standard of perfection to his people that they may try and examine themselves thereby. Now the danger of false theories of Church and State lies in the fact that these two distinct kinds of authority may be and often are confounded. Kings and party-leaders press beyond the limits of their duty, attempt to control opinion, use their coercive power to enforce abstract principles. Bishops and ministers attempt to control the coercive machinery of the State, to dictate laws and to decide political issues. Before there can be a true union between Church and State, we must begin by distinguishing the two powers and remitting each to its proper functions; but we must be on our guard against assuming the possibility of an absolute separation. As Mr. Edward Caird has expressed it, in his admirable Essay on Dante:

> [Church and State] can never cease to be rivals, and are therefore never safe from impure compromises, until they are brought to a unity, as complementary manifestations of one principle of life, which at once reveals itself in their difference, and overcomes it. The problem is, not to divide the world between God and Cæsar, or, as we should now say, between God and Humanity, but to give all to God in giving all to Humanity, Humanity being conceived, not as a collection of individuals, but as an organism in which the Divine Spirit reveals Himself.

Considered from the Church's point of view, the State is a necessary and useful power, ordained of God and entitled therefore to our loyal respect. To be a good Christian a man must be a good citizen, and what the State requires of the good citizen is not merely obedience but service. And, inasmuch as the operations of the State cannot be carried on without force, a Christian man may lawfully bear arms when the general safety requires it. In respect of his service he is in no way distinguished from other citizens; no privilege or immunity should be claimed on the ground of membership or office in any church. The French Government is well within its rights in requiring students for the priesthood to go through the same military training as other young men of the same age. The English law which exempts ministers of religion from serving on juries is a relic of privilege which might well be allowed to disappear. Privilege should as far as possible be excluded, but it is of course inevitable that a measure of political influence should belong to those men who take a leading part in the affairs of the Christian community. The opinion of Dr. Benson or Dr. Dale on a political issue carries more weight than the opinion of the ordinary citizen. This kind of influence is not to be brought within strict rules; it is for the individual minister to reconcile his duties in the two spheres, and this he cannot do unless he starts with a true conception of his ministerial position. There are few Englishmen who can read without disapproval the famous Pastoral issued by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. But if the Bishop is right in his estimate

of his own authority—if he represents a Church infallible in its modes of action—there is really nothing to disapprove. If there is a body of men among us who know for certain what is right and wrong in practice, the sooner and the more implicitly we commit ourselves to their guidance the better.

Considered from the State's point of view, the Church or any local part of the Church is a visible society, claiming the right to manage property (buildings used for worship, etc.) and to secure the observance of certain rules among its members. In its origin it is a private society, condemned and discouraged by the law. The task of governing men in the mass is a difficult one, and the statesman naturally looks with jealousy on any combination which draws away the allegiance of men and sets itself up to share authority with the State. Hence the 'dislike of associations,' which has often been pointed out as a feature of Roman and English law: hence the persecuting laws enacted by the Emperors against the early Christians. But Christianity was too strong to be put down; the Church advanced to the position of a private society tolerated and encouraged by the State, and then to the position of a public society, supported by and identified with the State—an established Church in the full sense of the term.

The State now uses its coercive powers with dogmatic rigour in aid of that visible society which it has accepted as representing the true Church. In the first place, it suppresses all rival societies, including any branches of the true Church not recognized by

the main body. In the second place, it helps to secure obedience to rule among the members of the Church by enforcing performance of their more obvious duties. Payment of tithe, for example, was first preached as a religious duty, then made a legal duty by the State. As the State brings its power to the aid of the established Church, it submits to be guided by the Church in many matters of high importance. Marriage laws, usury laws, and many other laws are made by the State on the advice of bishops and canonists. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the services rendered to civilization by the Church of the middle ages. The statesmen of those ages were working out a new system of national governments, to take the place of the Roman imperial system ; the Church taught them how their task might best be accomplished, and how the unity of Christendom might be preserved in spite of the diversity of the nations. It is not surprising that the State should have accepted from the Church that doctrine of authority which is still a living force in politics. A living force, but not a prevailing force ; for no modern government, unless that of Russia, is really a government of authority. No person is now coerced to join the Church, or to perform any religious duty. Tithes are exacted, but they are placed on the same footing as other rights over land and treated as a kind of property. Again, the State is not guided in any matter of importance by the Church ; the laws of marriage, for example, are not based on Christian principles, but on general rules of justice and expediency which apply to all men

equally, whether they be Christians or not. Disestablishment is almost an accomplished fact, or (another way of stating the same proposition) the establishment of the National Church is for most purposes on an equality with the establishment of a voluntary society. All Churches are equally protected by law; all exercise some influence on the course of legislation and government. The Church of England, for example, is distiuguished from the voluntary Churches around her in two, and only two, points. First, she enjoys the use of certain property and revenues set aside to form a national endowment of religion in the time when only one society claiming to represent the Church was recognized or tolerated by the State; second, her powers of self-government are subject to special restrictions and qualifications.

The endowment of the Church of England has been a long historical process extending over many centuries. Lands and buildings have been provided, chiefly by the princes and great men of the realm; tithes and other revenues have been secured to spiritual persons by individual acts of bounty, by custom, and by general rules of law. Lord Selborne has laboured to prove that endowment was the work of individual owners; free to give or withhold what was undoubtedly their own. On this we may remark, that an individual prince or noble, disposing of land or territorial revenues, was performing a public act, and must for many purposes be regarded as a representative of the community. His gift did not vest an absolute property in any ecclesiastical person or corporation; the property was

given that the people might be taught, and that works of charity might be done; and there is abundant evidence in our early statutes to show that Parliament has always claimed the right to limit the extent, and control the application of such gifts. Lord Selborne admits the right, but he seems to think that the property of a corporation should not be taken away unless in case of abuse. This is not the principle on which our Parliaments have been accustomed to act. When the old statutes of mortmain were passed, it would have been difficult to show that ecclesiastical corporations made a worse use of their lands than the average lay proprietor; the Churchmen of those days were above and not below the standard of improving landlordism. But Parliament, on grounds of general policy, thought it undesirable that any large addition should be made to the lands of the Church; therefore it was enacted that land given to a corporation should be, *ipso facto*, forfeited to the lord of whom it was held. If, on grounds of general policy, Parliament should think it desirable to withdraw the endowment now enjoyed by the Church of England, there would be nothing in such an act of withdrawal inconsistent with constitutional usage. Reasoners less careful than Lord Selborne will call out 'spoliation' and 'sacrilege,' but these terms are wholly out of place in this connection. If Parliament honestly thinks that an endowment ought to be withdrawn, it is not only entitled but bound to act on that opinion. True, Parliament may be mistaken; but a mistake in the exercise of legislative authority is not spolia-

tion any more than the mistake of a judge, who awards property to the wrong person. 'Sacrilege' means, it may be presumed, the appropriation of a consecrated thing to a profane purpose. But if we set aside technicalities of law and ritual, all good purposes are consecrated. Whether property should be devoted to one pious use, such as maintenance of clergymen, or to another pious use, such as maintenance of schools and hospitals, is a question to be solved by the discretion of those who have power to dispose of the property in question.

The established Church has the advantage of other churches in respect of her continued enjoyment of national revenues : on the other hand, she is more strictly controlled by the State than any unestablished society. It is tolerably plain that no society claiming to dispose of property can ever enjoy complete and unrestricted self-government; even the Salvation Army must draw its Plan of Campaign with due regard to the requirements of the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice. But an unestablished Church, so long as it refrains from disturbing public order, can keep itself within the domain of private law ; the State does not interfere with it unless on the demand or complaint of an individual seeking legal redress. The Church of England, on the other hand, is treated as a public institution ; her bishops are appointed by the State ; the Convocation of her clergy cannot act without the previous license of the Crown ; the State in the Clerical Subscription Act of 1865 defines the measure of conformity to her *lex credendi* which she

may exact from her ministers. These special restrictions are justified by statesmen on grounds of civil policy; they tell us that a church enjoying the advantages of a national establishment, would, if she were free to frame her own rules and dispose of her own property, be nothing less than *inperium in imperio*, and there is certainly considerable force in this argument. Broad Churchmen accept State control as the necessary safeguard of the Church's comprehensiveness; they question or deny the first article of Magna Charta; they do not wish to be free because they suspect that freedom would mean an internecine struggle between sacerdotalism and Protestantism. High Churchmen again are opposed on principle to the restrictions imposed on them; they complain that the *viva vox* of the Church is not heard in Acts of Parliament and Privy Council judgments; some of them think it might be well to give up the national establishment in order to enjoy a larger measure of spiritual independence. They do not hold that State control is always, and under all circumstances, bad for the Church; Keble, for instance, suggested that the long period of silence imposed on Convocation by Whig policy may have been providentially intended to protect the Church against herself, to prevent her from committing herself to the low eighteenth-century view of her own character and claims.

If the distinction between Church and Establishment has been correctly stated in the foregoing paragraphs, we are now in a position to deal with certain misconceptions which have confused and em-

bittered the disestablishment controversy. In the first place, it is clear that we may attack the national establishment without desiring in any way to injure or degrade the Church. Defenders of the establishment tell us roundly that they do not believe us when we say so, but this only shows that they are committing the strategic mistake of under-estimating the enemy. They imagine themselves to be engaged in a struggle with 'aggressive irreligion,' and it is undeniably true that some electors will vote for disestablishment, because they regard all religions as so many forms of imposture. But the strength of the movement is derived, as every politician knows, not from dogmatic unbelief of the type represented by Mr. Bradlaugh, but from religion of the type represented by Dr. Dale. And there are those of us who do sincerely think that the Church, as a Church, would be strengthened, not weakened, by separation from the State. What does the Church of England want, to make her parochial system effective, to overcome the apathy or hostility of so many labouring people? She wants, before all things, a better form of congregational polity. Working-men have learned to identify the Church with the clergy. They see, for instance, that a new vicar on arriving in his parish may alter the whole character of the services in the parish church without considering the habits and wishes of the people. They cease to think of it as *their* Church: it is an institution maintained, as they suppose, by the State without their assistance. Nobody who has studied our Nonconformist chapels from the inside will maintain that

they are perfect, but there is a keener sense of Church life among them than is usually to be found among the congregations of the established Church. Efforts are being made to give the laity of the Church a larger share in the management of her affairs, but the establishment is an obstacle in the way. So long as the Church of England retains her existing legal rights, so long will Parliament continue to remind her that she belongs to the nation, and must accept the position which the representatives of the nation choose to make for her. She complains, not without reason, of the crude and inaccurate language sometimes applied to her ministers by political speakers, but she is, for many purposes, a Church without a constitution, hampered in her defence as in her work by the political check which has been placed on all the organs of her government.

We must also take into account the difference between Church and Establishment in considering the action of our voluntary churches. It is said that Nonconformity is losing its religious character; many hard things are said of 'political Dissenters'; and the proceedings of some Church assemblies may seem to give a colour of probability to these charges. Anglican disputants ought perhaps to be cautious in pressing such charges, for if Dissenters are too political, the Church did her best to make them so, by excluding them, as Dissenters, from civil equality with Churchmen. But the political acts of a Presbyterian Synod or a Congregational Union are acts of voluntary establishment, not acts of the Church

When, for example, the Free Church of Scotland passes its annual resolution in favour of disestablishment, no single Free Churchman is in any way bound or controlled thereby; no man's membership or eldership can be taken away because he continues to adhere to the principles of Dr. Chalmers and distrusts the newer light of Dr. Rainy. There is, of course, a percentage of unwise persons even among Nonconformists. Here and there a minister may have been heard to declare that a Christian man must be false to his Master if he does not perceive the greatness of a particular statesman, or the merits of a particular measure; but these exceptional fanatics may safely be left to pair off with the other fanatics who think that a man who votes for disestablishment must necessarily be a champion of 'aggressive irreligion.'

Few of us will be disposed to deny that there is an element of danger both in political Dissent and in political Churchmanship. If mistakes in practice are to be avoided, if the religious character of the churches is not to be compromised, it behoves us to be almost punctiliously careful as to the forms of language we employ. To illustrate this general proposition, it may be useful to pass in review a series of statements bearing on the relation between religion and politics. They are extracted, not from theoretical treatises, but from the columns of the newspaper press.

The Church, says one, *is the best guardian of social order*. This statement is misleading: it is the State and not the Church to which the duty of maintaining order has been committed. The Church co-operates by keeping her own members in order;

but even this is true only with a qualification. In defining the general duty of loyalty, the New Testament is clear and emphatic. We are to honour the king (Nero, for example), and we are to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. The command is general, but not absolutely universal. When the law commands what is wrong (as when Cæsar commands us to worship him) the Church must disobey, and take the consequences, and let social order look to itself. When the law is only defective, we submit to it for the Lord's sake ; and the apostolic doctrine, thus qualified, coincides with sound political theory. True, the Church has to hold up a standard of purity and justice far higher than is to be found in the law ; but this standard can never be substituted for the law. The State has to deal with men in the mass ; it sets as a standard, not the best we know, but the best we can realize in political practice. Legal right is not always moral justice ; but acceptance of things as they are, recognition of the good and necessary element in established law, is the first step towards right action in politics.

The Church, says another, *is the true embodiment of social democracy*. Here, again, is a statement which lends itself easily to mistaken interpretations. The Christian doctrine of brotherhood, the Christian sentiment of equality, have exercised and must always exercise a considerable influence on politics ; but the Church has no mission to advocate any particular form of government, or course of policy, or mode of distributing property ; she has other and more

important matters to attend to. Her warfare is not with injustice or intemperance or any other of the sins of society, but with sin; with the evil principle in the hearts of men, not with any particular manifestation of it. 'Slaves, obey your master,' says the Apostle, not because he is blind to the miseries of the slaves or the vices of the master, but because, in the light of the truth which he preaches, the difference between master and slave is hardly worth considering. A Christian minister who consents to become a tribune of the people, is living on the surface of things instead of going to the root of the matter. What, at the most, are we to expect from 'social democracy?' A better distribution of property, better conditions of labour, a happier and more rational life for the masses of our people. So might it be!—but the New Testament seems to say that we may gain all that, and yet be as far from righteousness as we were. 'Democracy,' moreover, is a word of many meanings; it brings with it some associations which are non-religious or even anti-religious in their character. Why is it that the logical democrats of France have so often declared war against the Christian faith? It is because every Christian teacher begins by telling them that they need a Saviour. They do not see the necessity; they attribute the evil and unhappiness which they see around them to causes outside themselves; if every man had his rights, they hold that humanity would save itself without assistance. If humanity could march into the Church in a body, well; but to come in one by one through the strait gate of repentance—that is a

much less attractive kind of gospel to the social democrat.

Working-men avoid both church and chapel, because they see that justice has no place in Christian ethics, as expounded from our pulpits. There can be little doubt that this extract truly represents the opinion of many working-men; so far as our preachers and Church members are responsible for the mistake, let them bear the blame. But if justice means social justice, the service to be expected of the Church is service of a strictly limited character. A Christian man is bound to be strictly just in all the relations of life, but his faith and piety do not qualify him to administer justice on the large scale. For example, the question whether wages in a particular industry can be and ought to be raised is *primâ facie* a question for labourers, business men, and economists. If an archbishop or a Nonconformist minister takes part in the discussion, he is within his rights as a citizen, and he may be of great use, but he is not entitled, *quâ* Christian minister, to tell us with authority what justice requires. It is true that the minister who declines to pronounce a strong opinion may expose himself to misconception and unjust blame. When our Lord refused to decide a disputed question of inheritance, it is very possible that the disappointed claimant may have turned away with a feeling of resentment, not unmixed with contempt. "This great Teacher has nothing to say on a simple issue of justice and brotherly affection! He ought at least to decide for or against me, but He puts my appeal aside, and tells me He is no judge of such matters."

So it is that men slight and misjudge their best teachers, because they cannot make an easy and immediate application of the truths delivered to them.

It would be easy to add to the number of these illustrative texts, but enough has perhaps been said to bring out the true nature and the necessary limits of the Church's duty to the State : we may now proceed to consider what, under existing circumstances, is the duty of the State to the Church, or, if we must use the plural, to the Churches. Few Englishmen will deny that every religious society, not teaching immoral or anarchical doctrines, may reasonably claim the protection of the State for its worship and its property. Where Churches differ, most Englishmen will admit that the State is in no way qualified to decide the historical and theological questions involved. If this be so, the State will be well advised to stand out of ecclesiastical controversy as far as possible. The notion that the State is bound, as an individual is bound, to inquire and discover what is truth, is due to a misapprehension of the sense in which personality is attributed to a political community. The State is what lawyers call an artificial person, created for certain limited purposes. These purposes are mainly secular ; they are purposes for which men of all religions and men of no religion may and must co-operate. As we have already seen, the distinction between things secular and things religious is not strictly accurate ; it is in the nature of a cross division ; but it is a distinction which we all apply in practice every day. There is no formula by which we can determine with logical or legal pre-

cision the true province of the State. "Constitute government how you please, the greater part of it must depend upon the exercise of powers which are left at large."

Since the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689, the English State has been slowly disentangling itself from ecclesiastical controversy. One by one, the penalties imposed on Nonconformity have been abolished; the inequalities which remain are few and not of the first importance: but the process of disentanglement is not complete, so long as the State permits the use of an endowment which is and was meant to be national to a Church which does not include the whole nation. On religious grounds it is most desirable that the Church of England should receive a larger measure of self-government; on political grounds it is impossible to concede self-government if the Church remains in possession of her revenues and privileges. The application of these principles has brought about disestablishment in Ireland and in our colonies; a measure of disestablishment and disendowment in England is among the possibilities of the future. The task of framing and carrying such a measure is one from which even Mr. Gladstone seems to shrink; and there are shrewd politicians who tell us that the change we contemplate can only be made possible by the formation of a strong disestablishment party within the Church. We are not dealing with the Church of a small minority, as in Ireland. Whether this calculation is correct or not, we shall probably have ample time to discuss the practical question in

all its bearings, before we are called upon to embody our proposals in a bill.

Total disendowment is neither feasible nor desirable. With all respect for the authors of such plans as that which was given to the world in the *Radical Programme*, it may be suggested that they have missed the true meaning of religious equality. To deprive the Church of England of all her buildings and nearly all her property would be to place her in a position of disadvantage as compared with the voluntary churches: she would have to begin life again, to acquire by painful effort the resources and appliances which every other religious body now possesses. But while the Church must retain so much of her property as will provide a basis for her future work, the object of disendowment would be, to throw the maintenance of her ministers on her own members. This would be an advantage in the long run to the clergy, for the endowment of the Church is proving in many cases wholly inadequate, and benefices remain vacant because no poor man can afford to take them. The ministers of the Free Church of Scotland are better paid than the ministers of the Church of England, and they are paid out of a general sustentation fund, so that they are not dependent as individuals on their respective congregations. The Church of England has a wealthier body of members to draw upon than the Free Church ever had, and we are justified in believing that the energy called forth by independence would far more than make up for the losses involved in disendowment.

Should the disestablished Church be left to

organize itself, or should the State provide her with a constitution? This is perhaps a question of form rather than of substance. There would have to be a commission to superintend the process of disendowment on behalf of the State: and some representative body must be created to assume the management of the temporal concerns of the Church. It might be convenient to prescribe by legislation the mode in which this body should come into existence, but its composition and character would of course be determined by the wishes of the general body of churchmen. And here it may be remarked that one incidental advantage of disestablishment would probably be the abolition of a host of unnecessary courts and offices. The ecclesiastical law would cease to exist as law, but it would still be binding (subject to alteration by the representative body) on ministers and members of the Church as a body of rules which they would be taken to have mutually contracted and agreed to observe.

Should compensation be given to individuals holding Church preferments, or should the Church be left to provide for them? The plan of individual compensation is preferred by logical disestablishers; but it involves the unpleasant possibility, that some, at least, of the Church's ministers, may 'cut and compound,' abandoning their duties and clearing out with the money they receive. If the Church, as a society, is considerately treated by the State, it would surely be best to leave individuals to the honour and loyalty of their own people; a truly representative body might be trusted to prepare and

administer a scheme which would involve no hardship or injustice; it may be indeed that we should hear less of the poverty of the clergy after disendowment than we are accustomed to hear now.

What shall be done with the endowments to be diverted from ecclesiastical uses? It seems tolerably plain that the endowment of the Church should be treated as a Common Fund; the purposes for which the surplus remaining in the hands of the State may be, and should be, set forth once for all, and generally defined by statute. The commissioners should be instructed to prepare schemes for the distribution and management of the fund, and their schemes should take effect when confirmed by order in Council. By adopting this method of distribution, the right to initiate expenditure is placed in the hands of a permanent body: the case of the Church of Ireland shows how dangerous it would be to leave an unappropriated Church surplus on which party-leaders may draw as often as they want a million or so to keep some section of their supporters in a good temper. Care must be taken to make the Common Fund a means of permanent benefit to the people, and to see that no part of it is used in oiling the wheels of any party machine. Now that 'we are all Socialists' there will be no lack of claimants and projectors, but we must learn to distinguish between the socialism which aims at increasing the benefits which a man may enjoy in common with his neighbours, and the socialism which cuts the sinews of effort by relieving the individual of his personal and family responsibilities.

What then may we hope that the Church and State would gain by disestablishment and disendowment carried out on these lines? In the first place, the State would no longer be burdened with duties which it performs badly or ineffectively. Party-leaders would not be required to find safe men for bishoprics, or to 'put down ritualism,' or to decide how a parish may get rid of a clergyman who has fallen into evil habits. In the second place, social jealousies would be mitigated; we should in time shake ourselves free from the degrading idea that one form of religion is more genteel than another. There is indeed some danger that at first the tendency may be in the other direction. Disestablishment cannot be carried without a struggle, and in the bitterness of defeat (if they are defeated), some churchmen may be tempted to stand aloof from the successful party, and to emphasize the points of difference between themselves and their neighbours. There is, however, one strong reason for believing that this feeling of bitterness will not last. Disestablishment must to some extent change the character of the Church of England, by making her more dependent on her lay members, more subject to lay influence and guidance, less sacerdotal than she now is. Defenders of the establishment have argued that independence of the State is not incompatible with high sacerdotal pretensions; they point to the position of the Roman Church in Ireland and in the Province of Quebec. But the prevailing sentiment of Irishmen and French Canadians is favourable to the claims of the priesthood; the prevailing sentiment of

English lay churchmen is Protestant. The movement begun by the authors of the Tracts has affected both clergy and laity; it has destroyed many old habits and prejudices, and superseded many partisan opinions; it has set in motion a powerful current of sacramentalist doctrine and sentiment. But the success of the movement has been largely due to the care with which its Anglican leaders have avoided those forms of sacerdotal action and language which excite the opposition of English laymen. It is not with them merely a question of policy; there is something in the temper of men like Dean Church and Canon Liddon which makes them unwilling to assert their authority aggressively, however high may be their theory of its origin and nature. A better system of government would help to moderate the tone of the clergy generally, and bring them more into harmony with the laity. There are those who think that disestablishment would be followed by a schism within the Church, that the sacerdotal party would go over to Rome, or separate from the main body of Anglicans; but if this result should follow, the separatists are not likely to be numerous. It would indeed be an indefensible surrender of High Church principles, if those who hold such principles were to leave the Church of their baptism because of the passing of an Act of Parliament.

In attempting to forecast the methods and results of legislation, we do not lose sight of the end we have in view. The ultimate union of Church and State is an ideal set before us in the Bible and

cherished by every Christian politician. For the present we have to deal with an imperfect State—a State not wise enough or pure enough to act as supreme governor of the Church; and with an imperfect Church, divided into hostile sections which waste their energy in counter-working one another. It is only as State and Church become more conscious of their true functions and more fit for them that they will find themselves united in raising and redeeming humanity 'for the glory of God and the relief of man's estate.'

THE END.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS ON THE FIRST EDITION.

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ON THE SCRIPTURES

and the Person of Christ, Christ and the Christian, the Atonement, Prayer in Theory and Practice, the Kingdom and the Church, Christian Missions, Church and State. The place of honour is given to the Old Testament, likely because at present the light of criticism beats on it most fiercely. The writer is Mr. Bennett, Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, Hackney and New Colleges, London. It is a careful and clear statement of the present position of the question, and of the gains that have been made by modern research, while all due acknowledgment is made to the traditionalists for the loss which they feel in being asked to give up what was, and is, to them a treasured inheritance. It is written in a fine spirit. Perhaps the best known name amongst the essayists is that of Mr. Horton, the popular minister of Hampstead, whose works on Revelation have received cordial recognition. The subject of his essay is the Atonement, one of central importance. He states that his object is to advocate sobriety of assertion in dealing with the question. The last essay is by Mr. Thomas Raleigh, a name not unfamiliar amongst ourselves in another connection. Its subject is Church and State. It would seem as if this was not very specially related to the subject of the volume ; but Mr. Raleigh observes, 'there is no hard and fast line to be drawn between theology and political science,' and this is his justification. The essay is a thoughtful and temperate discussion of the question, and may be commended to the attention of those whom its author designates 'fanatics' on both sides."

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